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FROM

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VOL. 1234.

THROWN TOGETHER BY FL. MONTGOMERY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

MISUNDERSTOOD 1 vol.

0

THROWN TOGETHER

A STORY

BY

FLORENCE MONTGOMERY,

AUTHOR OF "MISUNDERSTOOD."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1872.

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PREFACE.

THE following Story, like its predecessor "**M** understood," is not intended for children. Even less so, since in the course of the narrative, the Author is obliged, now and then, to side, as it were, with the children against the parents.

The Story, though not devoid of "grown-up" characters, is mainly founded on the lives of children; and so appeals only to those who are interested in the subject.

May 1872.

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THROWN TOGETH

CHAPTER I.

The Heroine's Home.

FIVE o'clock on a July afternoon school-room, and the depressing sound of C.

Would not such a combination make the frivolous rejoice that their education completed?

Cecily Middleton, aged seven, is told down the piano, with her heavy finger wrist and arm a tremendous jerk every time her thumb's turn to go under; for when she is every time pulled by the governess at her side, and compelled to the bottom of the piano, and begin the

Nina Middleton, some years her senior, sits at the table, limp and listless, by way

rule-of-three sum. With her hair all pushed back from her hot face, and her chin resting on her hands, she is determining in her own mind that it is far too hot for any sum to come right; and she feels profoundly indifferent as to workmen and the rate of their wages, which is the problem she has been given to consider. What *can* it matter? Whether the answer will be in money or in workmen she feels incapable of hazarding an opinion, and it seems to her so very unimportant.

"Nina, vous ne faites rien."

Thus suddenly rebuked, Nina roused herself, and proceeded with a long-drawn sigh to multiply the first and second terms together, and to divide by the third, producing thereby a hideous confusion. Seeing her mistake, she, with another sigh of weariness and boredom, rubbed out what she had done, and began again; but the melancholy intonation of the scale of C, combined with the state of the atmosphere, seemed to render calculation impossible, and she found herself reducing pence to shillings, and allowing for forty-eight farthings in a pound. Growing desperate at last, with heat and incapacity,

she rubbed out the whole sum—question and all; and then, in despair at what she had done, she drew her pencil down the slate with a terrific squeak, which brought upon her the wrath of Mademoiselle, and elicited shrieks of delight and amusement from Cecily.

Of course anything that created a momentary diversion from the scale of C was hailed as a relief by Cecily; and it took Mademoiselle some minutes first to reprove Nina, and then to rise and reset the sum.

But this was no solitary instance of Cecily's power of deriving amusement from the trifling events of every-day life. The squeak of a pencil was quite sufficient, in lesson-time, to evoke her mirth; and any of the hundred little accidents to which we are all more or less exposed in our daily path could send her into fits of laughter at any moment. If Mademoiselle knocked her funny-bone, or caught her gown in the fender, upset a cup of tea into her lap, or stumbled over a stool, Cecily was off, and there was no stopping her.

She enjoyed the few minutes of leisure at the

piano to the full; and, after having recovered from the laughter produced by the squeak, she proceeded to swing her legs backwards and forwards to cool herself. In so doing, she made the startling discovery that by kicking the piano above the pedal, a vibration could be produced, and was immensely delighted. But, on attempting to bring the discovery to greater perfection by a somewhat more violent kick, Mademoiselle remonstrated from the table, and put an end at once to any further experiments. An attempt at "hot-cross buns" with one finger met with a similar reception, and she was reduced to twisting round and round on the music-stool, till Mademoiselle once more returned to her side.

But opportunities for amusement were not quite over yet; for, as Mademoiselle reseated herself, she contrived to knock her finger against the notes, and raised that wounded member to her mouth with an exclamation of pain. Peal upon peal from Cecily—truly delighted was she! She rolled about on her seat till she nearly fell off the music-stool; and Mademoiselle, in an injured and somewhat huffy

THE HEROINE'S HOME.

tone, desired her to resume her practice; laughter and amusement were lost in the of the scale of C.

Meanwhile Nina worked away at her finished it; put away her slate, and went to the open window, where she arrived just in time to see a hansom drive up to the door, and her face came out of it.

This was rather an unusual event, and she was puzzled to account for it. It was very strange that he came home at this hour. He generally went straight to the park from his club, and she thought something particular must have brought him home, which opinion was confirmed by hearing him call out to the footman at the door, in a tone of wonted excitement, "Has Mrs. Middleton come from her drive?"

Nina felt very curious to know what had brought him in such a hurry, and was just about to go out of the window, in order to make herself further mistress of what was going on below, when Cecily's music-lesson came to an end; and the young miss, having betaken herself to her room,

prepare for tea, the emancipated captive came running to the window, exclaiming eagerly, "Didn't I hear a hansom drive up?"

Nina instantly drew in her head, and came away from the window. Cecily's childish excitement over the hansom made her feel ashamed of her curiosity about it, and she answered, in an uninterested tone of voice, "Yes, it was papa."

Nina was a good deal older than her sister by years, and many years older by disposition and temperament, for Cecily was childish and backward for her age. Moreover, Nina was a very proud child, and made the most of the years between them. Cecily was always so over-excited, and over-interested in everything, that Nina often felt lowered in her own estimation by being interested in the things at all.

"Papa!" exclaimed Cecily; "oh! perhaps he's come to take us out in the park. What fun! what fun!"

And, in spite of the state of the thermometer, Cecily capered about, and clapped her hands with delight.

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These transports were childish, not demean herself by joining in them, she marked carelessly that she didn't think he might only have come to get a card, or perhaps to fetch his cards.

Presently Cecily said, "Here comes the carriage, and papa is standing on the step, waiting to speak to her."

Nina's curiosity overcame her, she jumped up and joined her sister at the door.

The carriage drove up to the door. Middleton advanced eagerly, and told him say, "Lydia, it is all settled in the room and read Magdalen's letter."

"Oh, Nina, *did* you hear?" "Yes, it was about Aunt Magdalen again. I am sure. This is the third time papa and mamma have talked to-day. What can it be?"

Nina answered indifferently that she didn't know; but the expression in her face was as uninterested as she would have had for her Aunt Magdalen, and her

boy, Mervyn Lyndsay, were objects of deep interest to her; and she was inwardly quite as anxious as Cecily to discover what the news could be that seemed to have reference to them. She leaned out of the window still further, to see what was going on below; but there was little more to be seen. Colonel and Mrs. Middleton entered the house, the footman took books and parcels out of the carriage, the coachman drove round to the stables, and the two little girls were left wondering, each in her different way, what it could all mean.

Leaving them in their perplexity, let us descend to the hall-door; and, going back a few minutes, let us stand with Colonel Middleton on the doorstep, while the carriage drives up to the door.

"Lydia, it is all settled! Come into my room and read Magdalen's letter." So saying Colonel Middleton led the way to the smoking-room, and shut the door. "I am so glad, I can't *tell* you," he said, as he handed his wife the letter, and watched her while she read it. "Magdalen deserves to be happy, if anyone does; and after all, in spite of her many years of widowhood, she is still quite a girl.

This was spoken sharply, as some one tapped at the door; for Colonel Middleton was in great excitement over his news, and he wanted to talk it over with his wife. Therefore he greatly resented the interruption. It was too late, however; the door opened, and a gentleman was announced. Mrs. Middleton went out by another door, and Colonel Middleton advanced to greet the new arrival. He was much too full of his subject to talk long on any other, and at the first pause in the conversation he introduced it.

"My sister, Mrs. Lyndsay, is going to marry Lord Wardlaw."

"I am delighted to hear it! I heard rumours of the kind, but as I was told it was not settled, I did not like to congratulate you. Mrs. Lyndsay has only one child, I think?"

"Only one; a boy. It was on his account chiefly that she hesitated. Her husband died when the boy was a baby, and mother and son have lived so much alone, and been thrown so entirely on each other's companionship, that he has been treated more as a friend and equal than boys of his age

while in London, where he was constantly in Magdalen's society. Old Lyndsay was my father's dearest friend, and was also a great deal at the house. When he saw how matters were going on, he came to my father, and asked him if he wished his daughter to marry a pauper. My dear old father, who would never have noticed anything, however palpable, that was going on right under his eyes, took fright directly; put himself at once into Lyndsay's hands, and begged him to help him out of the scrape. Acting upon his friend's advice, he immediately left town with my sister, on the plea of feeling ill himself and needing change of air.

"Meantime Lyndsay, who had interest just then with the Foreign Office, got Wardlaw this appointment, which he was too poor to refuse; and he proceeded at once to Madrid.

"Shortly afterwards my father died, and my sister found herself alone and penniless, dependent on me, who had already a wife and several children. It was then that Lyndsay stepped forward and laid himself and his fortune at her feet. Hers is a very

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grateful nature, and she had kindness all her life from her

"During her father's short had been her right hand. A wrong he had done her, she had

"Did *you* know of it?"

"Believe me, no; or I should have her to take such a step without eyes."

"Then how do you know

"I am coming to that, p my story my own way. Well eighteen months after his marriage

"Was she happy with him

"I believe she was happy have been very dull. To be fifty cannot be much of a child nineteen; and then they lived Glen-Mervyn, his wild out-of-door. So I saw very little of them. I went to see a doctor for Lyndsay after their marriage. That was the illness that ended with her

"I wonder why Wardlaw did not come back when he found she was free."

"You must remember that nothing had passed between them, and that he had no reason to suppose she cared for him. Quite the contrary. For almost the first thing he heard of her after he arrived in Madrid, was the report of her intended marriage. Also he may have been too proud to marry her when she was a rich widow, or he may have resented her marriage, or a hundred things. Anyhow, as we know, he didn't, and it is only a year ago that, by the successive deaths of his father and brothers, he became Lord Wardlaw, with wealth sufficient to enable him to give up his diplomatic career, and to return to England.

"He and Magdalen met again this spring in London. I must own my wife and I secretly hoped that the old intimacy might be renewed, and that we might see her rewarded for her long years of devotion to others. Imagine our disappointment when she left town at the end of June, and returned with her boy to Wales. Rumour, however, was not so silent on the subject as she; and we soon heard

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that she had refused Lord Wardlaw. U wrote to her, urging her to reconsider mination. I urged her not to throw away chance of happiness, and my wife added treaties to mine.

"Magdalen answered both letters in gentle way, thanking us most gratefully interest in her, but saying at the same time decidedly that she had given the matter a of consideration, and that the conclusion arrived at was final.

"As my sister's only relation, I saw Wardlaw, and spoke to him on the subject. course of our conversation we referred and somehow or other the truth oozed for the first time, discovered that both victims of a plot between my father and say. Lord Wardlaw himself had only directed till his return to England, and Mrs. said, had evidently no idea *who* had appointment, nor why it was done. own words. 'At the time we were at each other's inexplicable conduct,

we had been mistaken in supposing *ourselves* cared for. *She* judged by my accepting an appointment without telling her, or coming to wish her good-bye; and *I* judged by what Mr. Lyndsay told me, which was that she had begged her father to take her out of town, as she was tired of London and its gaieties. I left England in a state of pique, and the announcement of her intended marriage fell under my eyes very shortly. It seemed to confirm my original impression, which was, that in spite of the disparity of years between them, it was Lyndsay she cared for, and not me at all. I believe *I* should have enlightened her as to all this; but I could not make up my mind to be the one to lower her son's father in her eyes. Besides, she *might* have resented it, and I *might* have done my own cause more harm than good. After all he was her husband afterwards; and probably in that relation he behaved himself so as to wipe out any early offences, and I should have been sorry to tarnish his memory.

"After this conversation I wrote again to my sister, laying the facts of *the* case plainly before

her. I feared that, besides step-father, she might be having something of true to her necessary she that sort; and one who had should be true withholding from her the strongest argument Lord Wardlaw used him for his arguments in his such scruples reticence, but

"I told her myself. feeling all the exactly how was, my sister while what For the answer's sense of anxiously I waited. But he factory one; for though I an answer— for my dear make the slightest or my husband's conduct—yet has accepted Lord Ward about."

Colonel Middleton

waited to receive his friend's renewed congratulations. The conversation then branched off to other subjects, and shortly afterwards his friend took his leave, and Colonel Middleton went up into the drawing-room to seek his wife.

He found her surrounded by five o'clock visitors, and saw there was not a chance of speaking to her; so, after talking over his sister's engagement with one or two ladies who knew her, he strolled out of the room, and bethought himself of what he would do next. This was his life. He was always wondering what he would do next.

Rowland Middleton was a man who "hung about" all day. He had nothing to do. If he had had, he would not have done it. He was an easy-going indolent man, who left everything to other people, and found it answered very well. He lived on his wife's fortune, and had no employment of his own. He had sold out of the army on his marriage, and had ever since congratulated himself on having done with the trouble and worry of a constantly recurring occupation.

He was a kind good sort of man, not without

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a certain degree of cleverness and amusing in society; but ended, for he never opened his mind in any way. But he fond of his children, and had an unkind thing in his life.

Such was the man to whom signed the care and responsibility—five sons and three daughters.

He had married young a himself, and perhaps his wife was for him. She was an only child and had always been accustomed way, and been spoiled and made all the energy, all the strength of the fortune that he lacked. The shire was hers, the house in London she was capable of managing it and him likewise. He left everything saved him trouble, and she liked particularly the case with the children. The son was full of theories on the subject. Her children were suffering under

always follows an excess of any kind. The reaction from despotism is anarchy, and again from anarchy it will always be despotism, and so on for ever.

Mrs. Middleton, as a child, had been brought up on the new system of education—where children are, and know they are, the chief objects in the house; are always in their parents' society, and join as they please in every conversation. Mrs. Middleton as a mother had reverted to the system on which her parents had been educated, and brought up her children strictly, assigning to them their school-rooms and their nurseries as their places of abode, and only admitting them to their parents' society at stated times. No child of Mrs. Middleton's ever strolled into the drawing-room at promiscuous hours. There was never any danger of the door opening slowly, and a small head protruding itself somewhere below the handle of the door, while the owner of the head delivered itself of some little remark invented as an excuse for getting into her society. But as Nina Middleton is the heroine of this story, we shall hear more of Mrs. Middleton's system and its results hereafter, and so need

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not animadvert upon it now, except in
affected her husband, of whom we were

He had never been encouraged
upon his children's lesson hours, either
them visits in the school-room, or
out walking with him.

By degrees he had ceased to ex-
panionship in his children after their
life had fairly begun, especially
eldest boys had gone to school,
room party consisted of the two
this story has already spoken. I
him that it was too early or
wanted to send for them. They
begun their lessons, or *just* se
So he contented himself with
ones in the nursery, and see
times, *i.e.* luncheon, and fo
dressing for dinner. That
He was not a man who would
engagement for the sake of
And so it often happened
luncheon, or late in dressi

little girls did not meet all day. Sometimes ~~they~~ but this was very rarely—he would take them for a walk, and on the hope of this walk the sanguine Cecily lived from day to day.

Mrs. Middleton always had the school-room party down to luncheon. It was the exception she made to the rules of the old system. She considered it a good thing, lest the children should grow shy in their manners or awkward in their ways.

These London luncheons were a great penance to the little girls. Their shut-up school-room life made them shy and sensitive, and their parents' ways with them during that meal were not calculated to help them, diametrically opposed as those ways were. For their mother never lost an opportunity of finding fault with them, and pointing out their failings, no matter who was there; while Colonel Middleton's way of noticing them was by a kind of fatherly teasing, which, highly amusing to him, was a great, though unexpressed, terror to them, for they never knew what he was

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going to say next. It wa
to be "funny" at their e
made him a favourite in
source of dread to his li
were very fond of him; i
doubt that if the questio
of putting to their your
best, your papa or you
to the little Middletons,
very decidedly in Colo

He never scolded t
in any way; he left a
as they were nicely dr
see him, that was all
pretty little girls, and
quite satisfied with th
head about their chara
his wife complained of
and Cecily "very childis
was he at all concerned
esses said Nina was
Cecily lazy and inatte
naughty sometimes," t

right they should show it in the school-room, and keep their good behaviour for downstairs."

Taking his wife's tone, he called Nina "a queer customer," but he himself seldom saw anything in her to justify his saying so. He noticed certainly that she often flushed angrily, and tossed her head at luncheon when her mother found fault with her, but this he rather admired; he thought it showed she had "a spirit of her own," and he liked it: it became her so well. He had an idea sometimes that she took things rather too strongly. He thought it a pity; he always took things so easy himself; but he supposed she would find out her mistake as life went on.

Nina was what is called "an odd child." She was silent and reserved, singularly undemonstrative, and rather obstinate and self-willed. The nurses called her "haughty," and the governesses called her "cold." Her mother never professed to understand her, and often expressed it as her opinion that she would grow up a very disagreeable woman. But her father, though he could not get her to chatter to him as Cecily did, did not discover all

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this in her, or think of her as a character. He was proud that he could discover in her to his sister. Also she was three eldest being boys. As a girl, he was certainly more not the same pride in her. Nothing, very shy and timid him, away from her mother, relieved from the fear of his she would chatter to him as teased her a great deal; he was just the sort of child to was always so affected by readily that her mother called was a very sore point with father sometimes converted or "Silly-Billy," and the at luncheon before visitor stant state of anxiety during

When her school-boy poor Cecily had a sad time of father's refined teasing

Thrown Together. I.

there was a goose at luncheon, she knew as well as possible that before the carving-knife was plunged in, he would turn to her and say "Drop a tear for your brother." Then if, when she thought him too busily engaged in carving to notice her, she surreptitiously said "Yes" to the servant when he brought her some, her father would be sure to look up and say, "Eating your own brother, unnatural Silly-Billy!" If anyone could have known how the child dreaded Michaelmas Day!

"Why do you eat goose, then?" asked Nina contemptuously one day, when Cecily had been dismissed in tears from the dining-room, because, as her mother said, she couldn't take a joke; "if you didn't eat it, there wouldn't be such a talk about it. It's every Michaelmas Day the same thing."

"It's the apple sauce!" sobbed Cecily.

Sometimes the simple child would be caught unsuspectingly.

"Did I hear you singing this morning, Cecily?"

"Me singing? No, papa."

"What was that noise, then, in the garden under my window?"

"Noise, papa? I did
the old donkey brayed,

"Exactly; I thought
I knew I could not mis

As we began by say
fond of him all the sar

They were the sar
call them at the always
ing with him. the right

dullness of their The lat
pleasure to their schoo

he is debating them; and
next, they are in his

as fast as they both be
out in the park. can, i

They have been, e
ever since they heard

door, wondering what
like all children, Nina

very much taken up w
and were always puttin

the fashion of those w
haps, from the state

lived, **they** did it more than most **children**; but it is more generally done than parents have any idea of. And so it was, that from a few words dropped lately at luncheon, and other ways too insignificant to convey any idea except to already sharpened comprehensions, these two young **creatures**, who lived such a shut-up school-room life, that they were not supposed to know of anything that went on outside its walls, not only knew that there was a secret, but were perfectly aware that it concerned their Aunt Magdalen and their Cousin Mervyn.

To return to Colonel Middleton. With the strange contradiction which we often find in a character, this man, who never took the trouble to manage his own affairs, was very fond of managing other people's; and he had always turned his attention very much to those of his only sister, the Mrs. Lyndsay whose intended second marriage was causing him such untold satisfaction. To begin with, his sister was a great deal younger than himself, so that he had always been accustomed to look upon her as a child. And then she had been left a widow when she was so very young. Moreover, she had

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been left with an only son,
and anyone who heard Co
on the sad position of a v
the help of a husband's adv
trol, would never have sup
dispensed with all three, an
out them. When his sister
bestow many of his idle hou
her, discoursing on the man
the education of children—
she knew him to be profor
did what was the kindest a
listened patiently, and was
in her and in her boy, and
what her own right-minded
her was best; and he, mist
courtesy, would go away pr
ance of having directed her
be very long before he dis
advice had not been taken.
her to send her boy to sch
little fellow was out of pett
say was now a well-grown b

and it was only now and then that it flashed across Colonel Middleton that his nephew was still at home.

It was, however, not entirely for the sake of giving advice to his sister, that Colonel Middleton was so often to be found sitting in her drawing-room when she was in town. He was really fond of her, and there was something about her house and surroundings that he did not find in his own. There was a sense of calm and repose about her which he could not define, and a charm in her society and conversation which always attracted him. Everything in her house went on smoothly; there were no jars. At home, though the children were kept so strict, and there were so many rules and regulations, there was always a noise and a bustle. The fact was, there was no repose about Mrs. Middleton. She was always scolding a servant, or a tradesman, or a child. She never sat in one place long; was always bustling in and out of the room, or going up and down stairs; always writing notes, sending messages, or receiving parcels. Though she had nothing to do with the children's

Mervyn always went up to the nursery without a murmur.

Colonel Middleton himself was always the first to object to such a measure; he was very fond of the boy. He was such a handsome merry little fellow, and so manly and independent; and yet he had such engaging manners, and such pretty caressing ways. There had always been something very attractive about the child ever since he was quite a baby. Colonel Middleton had often been puzzled to think why this child's demeanour was so different to that of his own children. Even the way he came into the room was so different to the shy bored manner in which his children presented themselves. This little fellow always came bounding in, so sure of a welcome, so certain that his appearance in the room was just as great a pleasure to others as it was to himself; so happy to see him. His was the fearless confidence of one who had never known anything but love all his life, and Colonel Middleton liked to watch him at his games, too; to

Taffy was a Welshman,
Taffy was a thief.

His own little Cecily would have swam away in her tears at once; but Mervyn, before he was four years old, had learnt to retaliate by calling him "Uncle Rowley-poley," and would retort upon his rhymes by a vigorous

Rowley-poley, gammon and spinach,
Heigho, says Uncle Rowley.

Of course all this was some time before our story opens. As we said before, Mervyn was now a well-grown boy in jacket and trowsers; but the liking for the boy remained in Colonel Middleton, and he still was aware of the difference between him and his own children, though he could not define what it was. At the same time, he never had thought, and did not now think, of comparing his wife's system of education with his sister's; he always felt so sure the former must be right. Besides, he was much too lazy ever to take matters into his own hands. "To take things as they are, and make the best of them," had ever been the practice of his life; and also he was well aware that what could be done

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with an only child could not be done in the case of a large family. He would have been the first to complain if the children became too forward, or, at the least in the way. He liked their society, and he felt inclined for it; but he by no means liked the trouble of children; and it happened constantly in the season that he was so busy amusing himself that two or three days would elapse without coming to speech with his little school-room!

We left him just now, thinking what he would do next. It occurred to him, as he stood upstairs debating, that his little daughters would finish their lessons; and that as he had an hour, he might as well take them out as do anything else. So he ran upstairs, turned the passage to the school-room, and gave a whistle. There was no answer at first, repeated it several times. Presently a distant end of the passage opened, and a boy said—

“Is that the Bully that keeps on whistling?”

“No, Silly-Billy, it's me. Come here.”

Cecily ran up to him, joyfully whispering, "What will mamma and Mademoiselle, say us out in the park, papa, please do."

"Oh, Mademoiselle, she says; or perhaps its *coup-de-vent* migraine, she's been rather sick. She thinks, as she's been rather sick."

Colonel Middleton thought Mademoiselle be clever to get *coup-de-vent* on so sultry a day also that sickness was not generally part complaint.

"Why, there's not a breath of wind anywhere," he said.

"Cecily means *coup-de-soleil*," said Nina, coming at the door.

This was much more comprehensible. Colonel Middleton sent a very civil messenger to Mademoiselle, to the effect that if she would lie down and rest, he would relieve her pupils, and take them out for a walk.

"But make yourselves very smart," he said, he left them; "I can't walk with little fellows."

"Sundays, then, I suppose?" said Cecily.

THE HEROINE'S HOME.

"Sundays?" repeated Colonel Middleton, mystified.

"I mean frocks and hats," she answered.

"Frocks and hats?" he questioned, still bewildered; "what *does* she mean, Nina?"

"She means are we to put on our Sunday things, our best things, you know," explained Nina.

"Oh, I see! Yes, your best clothes, certainly and come into the smoking-room when you are ready."

They joined him in about ten minutes, looking as neat and pretty as any father could desire; he got up and put on his hat.

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CHAPTER II.

Children's Lives in the London Season.

"WHERE shall we go?" he said, as he sh
hall-door.

"Oh! the park, papa,—*please*,"—said Ceci

"What makes you so fond of the park?"

"Oh! it's such fun, papa. I like seeing
people riding, and passing the people wh
know, and seeing you take off your hat, or h
your umbrella."

"Hold up my umbrella?"

"Yes. When you see a lady, you alwa
your hat off; but when you see a gentlem
you know, you hold up your umbrella; at l
he's riding you do. If he's walking you h
two fingers, and say 'How are you?' Nin
always call them papa's 'how-are-yous.' V
them sometimes in the streets or squares wh

"No, hardly ever. There's only one boy may play with, and he's gone now."

"Who's that?" asked Colonel Middleton.

"Oh, that's Mervyn," said Cecily.

At this moment Nina, who had been lingering behind kissing her hand to the perambulator had been watching, came running up.

"What were you looking at?" asked her father.

Nina pointed to a perambulator which was crossing the road, in which he recognised his youngest children.

"Going home to bed I suppose," he said, turning round and shaking his stick at them. The nurses were seen making frantic attempts to induce the children to see and return their father's salutation; but the little occupants of the perambulator looked in every direction but the right one. The eldest kissed his hand in the direction of the father, and the other maintained a stolid indifference to everything and everybody.

"So you play with Mervyn?" resumed Colonel Middleton, as they walked on; and he was silent for some time after, his thoughts wandering of

Colonel Middleton.
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THE LONDON SEASON.
Mervyn. He wondered how the boy would take the
news of his mother's intended marriage. "Do
children in general object to step-fathers and step-
mothers?" he asked himself. "Why should they
object to the former?" He thought perhaps his
little girls might be able to throw some light upon
the subject; and never for a moment dreaming that
they would be able to follow the course of his
thoughts, he asked abruptly: "How should you feel
if anyone were to tell you you were going to have
a papa?"

Nina saw the drift of the question in a moment,
and flushed indignant scarlet up to the eyes. The
more simple Cecily was quite innocent of his mean-
ing, and answered directly: "Going to have a papa!
Why, we've got one."

"Ah! to be sure, so you have, I forgot," said
Colonel Middleton, rather puzzled at seeing
case was not quite analogous. "But I mean,
posing you were told you were going to have
new one?"

"Two papas!" exclaimed Cecily; "why
couldn't have two, could we?"

Thrown Together. I.

"No, no, I don't quite mean that. Suppose you'd never had one—— No, bother, how! Supposing you had had one and he was dead, should you feel if you were told you were going to have another?"

"I should be crying so about the dead one. I shouldn't be able to see the new one," said tender-hearted Cecily, looking very much as if she were going to begin at once.

Colonel Middleton got a little afraid of her in the street. He took her hand, and tried to get her out of it. "How *can* I put it?" he asked and questioned. "Look here," he said; "supposing I couldn't remember your own papa, how would you feel if you were told you were going to have another?"

"Why, that would be like Mervyn," said Cecily; "he can't remember his papa."

"Exactly," said Colonel Middleton eagerly, "how would Mervyn feel?"

But before Cecily could answer, Nina interrupted. "How would he feel? angry, miserable! I

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leton eagerly; "well,

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never look at him, or speak to him; no more would I, if I were Mervyn!"

"Whew!" whistled Colonel Middleton. This was altogether a bad look-out. He walked on silently for some time, feeling, as he had once or twice felt before, when in conversation with his eldest daughter, that she was a little too much for him.

This easy-going man had occasionally been made rather uncomfortable by a look in her eyes, and by the sense that she altogether took things much more strongly than he did. He wondered now why she had suddenly got so hot about this question, and glanced curiously now and then, as they walked on, at the handsome little face by his side, still flushed with the eagerness with which she had spoken. He turned to the more shallow Cecily, and changed the conversation.

While they two chatted away, Nina walked along in a perfect storm of indignation. She had course, in her usual way, put two and two together, and saw how it all was as clearly as possible. Sympathy for Mervyn and hatred to the imaginary step-

father were the two prominent features of her heart. She was very fond of her cousin, and a great admiration for his character, different from it did so entirely from her own. Perhaps that was why she admired it. Their natures were naturally opposed, their way of life utterly different, and yet these two children had a fascination for the other; so that though Nina could not understand his open unreserve, his demure ways with his mother, and his entire freedom with her, she could not overcome the sensitive pride by which she was herself bound up, yet she could sympathise very strongly with him. As she thought of the way in which he was bound up in his mother's, of the way in which he watched over and attended to her, and always to prefer her society to any other, she always pictured to herself an old ogre of a father coming in between them and marriage. She quite stamped her foot upon the ground, and grew hot all over in her sympathetic indignation. He would interfere with Mervyn; he would perhaps keep him all day in a school-room.

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herself was kept, shut out altogether from
ther's society; he would even perhaps se-
entirely from her, and send him to school.

The crack of the little heel upon the
would almost have been audible to her father's ear
had he not at that moment been stopped by a pass-
ing "How are you?"

Colonel Middleton drew his friend on one side
so that the children should not overhear the con-
versation; but Nina was quite able to understand
that her father was being congratulated on her
aunt's marriage; and as the friend moved on, she
caught the words, "Wardlaw is such a charming
fellow."

"Wardlaw!" she muttered to herself; "such a
name, too! I'll never call him Uncle Wardlaw, that
I'm quite determined!"

Colonel Middleton and his little girls were now
standing opposite Stanhope Gate, waiting for an op-
portunity to cross over into the park.

As they stood there, an omnibus passed, loaded
inside and out with passengers. Little Cecily's eyes
wandered all over it, amused to see how covered it

was with human beings. Colonel Middleton just going to tell her not to stare up at the bus, when, to his horror, he saw her face light with excitement and recognition. She smiled and nodded repeatedly, and a man, sitting on the omnibus, made her a hesitating but respectful bow.

"Cecily," he exclaimed angrily, "what are you about?"

"Didn't you see him, papa?" she answered so excited at the occurrence that she did not heed her father's tone; "and how smart he was! I saw him so smart before. I think he must have been at the Crystal Palace. I suppose it is because he was so smart that you didn't know him again?"

"What are you talking about?" Middleton, not at all mollified by this, said. "How should I or you know a low fellow top of an omnibus?"

"Papa!" she exclaimed reproachfully, "the clock-man!"

At this moment the policeman made a sign that the road was clear, and they were obliged to cross, so that Cecily's lecture was postponed for a time; but as soon as they got into the park, he said gravely, "Now remember, Cecily, never on any consideration nod to anyone on the top of an omnibus. Young ladies do not do these kind of things. Your mamma would be horrified if she heard of it. Do you hear me?"

"But, papa," persisted Cecily, "he was our own clock-man, who winds up the school-room clock *every* Saturday; and as its a half holiday, and Mademoiselle in her room, I always have a nice little talk with him, and he *is* so kind and amusing. So how could I not nod to him when I see him in the streets?"

All this was said in a most plaintive voice, and she looked up to her father imploringly, adding, "He is the *nicest* clock-man, and he *does* make school-room clock go so well."

When she first began to speak, Colonel Middleton had been making up his mind not to lady who was approaching, who he remembered

once meeting at a croquet party in his own neighbourhood in the country, and who he saw waiting to bow to him; but the look in Cecily's cent eyes as she asked him how she *could* in her school-room friend when she met him in street, made him feel rather ashamed of his position. He felt rebuked by the child's won gaze, and made the lady in question a very bow as she passed. Lucky for him that he so, for the moment she was gone Cecily recovered her with all the astonishment and excitement children feel at seeing a country friend in London. They always seem to think it so extraordinary anyone whom they are accustomed to see among fields and hedges should be walking in park like any other person.

"Why, that is the lady that stays soon with Mrs. Stapleton! Oh, papa! what a pity I didn't stop and speak to her! Why *didn't* I stop?"

"My dear, I don't know that I had anyt say to her."

"Oh! I could have thought of such

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 of such lots of

things. You might have asked after Mrs. Staple-
 silver pheasant, and the guinea-pigs, and so many
 besides. *May* I run after her and call her back
 speak to you?"

But somehow Colonel Middleton did not
 that lively interest in his neighbour's belongings
 that Cecily seemed to take it for granted he should
 and he positively refused to allow any advances
 the kind to be made. The lady, he said, was
 joying her walk, and he insisted that she should
 allowed to pursue her way unmolested.

Directly after they came to another stop. A tall
 fair man hailed Colonel Middleton with an appeal-
 ance of great pleasure, which feeling seemed to
 procated. Cecily saw they were likely to talk
 time, so she strayed a little from the group, some-
 leant against the railing, in imitation of some
 tlemen she saw doing so, to their great amusement;
 but Nina, attracted by something in the
 comer's face, stood watching him as he conversed
 with her father. He laughed very often, and it
 such a ringing, pleasant laugh, that she caught
 self once or twice laughing too; it sounded so
 very

cheery. She felt quite glad when she heard her father ask him to luncheon the next day, and hoped they would continue talking some time, for much did she like watching the pleasant face.

Presently she caught his eye, and he came forward smiling kindly, and shook hands with her, saying, "This is one of your little girls, I am sure," and asked her her name. She fancied he looked a little disappointed at her answer, but he said nothing, and resumed his conversation with her father.

He seemed very amusing, for Colonel Middleton laughed almost as much as he. As he talked, Nina could not keep noticing how often he glanced at her, and always with an expression of interest. At last he said good-bye, shaking hands cordially with Colonel Middleton, and taking off his hat with a smile to Nina, which pleased her very much, though it made her feel rather shy.

"Come along," said her father. "Will you, Cecily?"

Cecily was engaged in trying to copy the title of one of the gentlemen she had been with.

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ings, and trying to get her elbows on the
she might support herself by them, as he
But being many inches too short, the
proved a failure, and being called to
Colonel Middleton, she gave it up, and
and her sister.

Nina longed to know who the stranger was,
for that very reason could not make up her mind
to ask.

Cecily saved her the trouble.

"Papa," she said, "who is that gentleman?"

"Well, dear," he answered, in as indifferent
manner as he could assume, "I don't know that you
will be much the wiser if I tell you. His name
Lord Wardlaw."

Nina took a step backward, in her astonish-
ment.

"That Lord Wardlaw!" she mentally said, "That
Mervyn's step-father!"

Her feelings with regard to her aunt's marriage
underwent a sudden change. The interfering

ogre disappeared, and she began to think she not pity Mervyn so very much after all.

"I shall call *him* Uncle Wardlaw," she settled her own mind.

"We must be going home," said Colonel Midton, looking at his watch.

"Home?" said Cecily regretfully, "back to dull old school-room, away from the four-in-hand and all the fun. Oh dear! what a pity!"

"Well, I am going to do a little shopping first," said her father, "so I shall not go home straight, and perhaps I'll take you back in a moment."

This made up for everything. Cecily's idea of the height of bliss began and ended in 'a hand and she became as eager to leave the park as had been to come into it. They turned out at Albert Gate.

"What sort of shop, *papa*?" she said eagerly.

"That one," he said, pointing to the flower shop opposite. "I want to get a flower for my coat."

"Oh dear, that's rather dull!" said Cecily,

They called a hansom outside, and jumped in with great delight. She sat beside her father, and had a capital view of everything all day long. She was very cadilly, and indulged in little bows to the ladies every now and then, unknown to her father, who was not looking her way.

She threw open the doors with a great crash when they stopped, and tried to jump out on to the pavement, as she had so often done. She watched her father do so often ; but he never looked from the sc

But her legs not being long enough for the operation, she fell short of the curb-stone, and splashed into a puddle lately deposited by a water-cart.

"Really, Cecily, you are too clumsy," said her father; "look at your boots."

Cecily looked in dismay, and made no answer. She was afraid of her way upstairs, in great fear of her mother.

Nina went up to her father and said good-night.

boy cousin, and she did not feel much interest in it.

"Oh, Nina, we'll go to the top of the stairs, and see them all go down to dinner. I've found a better place than ever to see from, where there's plenty of room for two."

When they returned to the school-room it was only a quarter to eight, and therefore too soon for any arrivals. Nina instantly took a book, and sat down upon the floor with it.

Cecily, who had already stationed herself at the window, was in despair.

"Oh! Nina, *don't* read. I know if you once begin, you'll never leave off to look at the people."

"Yes, I did," said Nina absently; for she was already deep in her book, and hardly heard what her sister was saying. "I can, I mean I should—I shall."

"Oh! you're not attending a bit," said Cecily, despairingly; "you're thinking about that stupid book, and here comes the first carriage and everything. I wish there were no books in the world,

THROWN TOGETHER.

sional remarks—"Ah! quelle belle toilette! Mais
vraiment! Combien c'est comme il faut! ^{RE}gardez
donc! que cette dame est bien mise! Quelle char-
mante coiffure!"

"A hansom! A hansom! and a 'How-are-you' in
it," exclaimed Cecily, drawing in her head. ^{Nina,}
I do believe it's the same we met in the park!"

Down went Nina's book, and she was at her
sister's side in a moment. She was only just in
time to see a tall man pay his cab, and run up the
steps. But she was disappointed, for it was not
Lord Wardlaw, or anyone the least like him.

"How could you say it was one we saw in the
park, Cecily! He was tall and fair, and ^{this man}
has got nasty dark hair, quite black and oily.
Phaugh!" And Nina made a gesture of disgust.

Cecily took it up rather warmly. "Dark hair
isn't nasty a bit, and I'm sure he's a very
He spoke so kindly to the cabman when
next door by mistake, and didn't holloa
at him like some people would, and
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CHILDREN IN THE LONDON SEASON.

"Cécile Cécile," said Mademoiselle reprovingly, catching only the last word, "Taisez-vous donc!"

Thus rebuked, Cecily turned again to window, muttering as she did so, "Besides fair man isn't the only 'How-are-you' in world."

But to Nina just now he was, for her thoughts were full of Mervyn, and she wanted to know more of the man who was to bring such a change in his life. So she made no objection when Cecily presently suggested that it was time they should and establish themselves on the staircase, for she wanted to satisfy herself whether Lord Wardlaw was of the party or not.

Mademoiselle agreed to the plan on condition that they would promise not to make a noise, let themselves be seen, and also that they would return very soon, as it was time for Cecily to go to bed. She herself remained behind to have her supper. Her head, she said, was still bad, and it was probable she should retire early. The little girls wished her good-night, and ran down

stairs, settling themselves in a corner where ^{they} could see without being seen.

The drawing-room doors were open, and ^{they} could hear a faint buzz of conversation every ^{now} and then rise and die away almost directly, to begin again in another part of the room, with the same melancholy result. Their mother's clear decided tones rose above the rest every now and then, as if she were making an effort to suggest topics which might furnish some sort of spasmodic conversation to cheer the gloomy interval between the arrival of the guests and the announcement of dinner. At last the butler came up the stairs, and went into the drawing-room.

There was a moment's greater silence than ~~any~~ ever, and then, with a rush and a roar, conversation sprang up. Then came the rustling of ~~gowns~~ and the tramp of many feet, the sound of many voices, and mingled laughter, getting nearer and nearer to the children as the party streamed out on the landing and passed down the stairs.

It seemed as if each man had for many weeks kept pent up within him a certain conversation he

CHILDREN IN THE LONDON SEASON.

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wished to hold with the particular lady who was
consigned to him to take down to dinner, and that
now, at last, the opportunity had come.

Nina and Cecily felt quite deafened by the tor-
rent of words which swept past them. "What
chatter-boxes!" muttered Cecily, but she was called
to order by a frown from her elder sister.

First came their father, good-looking, cheerful,
and witty, evoking light rippling laughter from the
pretty woman on his arm, while his attention was
divided between her and Nina's yellow rose-bud,
which he was re-arranging in his button-hole. Then,
two and two, came the guests, strangers to the
children mostly, though they sometimes recognised
faces they knew in open carriages and an occasional
"How-are-you;" but Nina looked in vain for Lord
Wardlaw. Last of all, on the arm of some foreign
prince, erect, well-dressed, and self-dependent, came
the children's mother.

Clear and loud were her tones as she discoursed
with him in his own language, every word of which
was intelligible to her eldest daughter. Any close

observer would have seen Nina shrink into herself a little as her mother swept out upon the landing, as if there were something in that mother's appearance and manner which jarred a little upon the child's sensitive organisation. Nay, more, as if her very presence excited some curious feeling within her; for her cheeks flushed a little, and her eyes fell, while into the corners of the tightly compressed little mouth crept an expression which was not fear, nor dislike, nor contempt, but which partook a little of all three, and was gone before one could be certain it had been there at all, changing into keen interest and excitement as her mother's words reached her. "So you knew Lord Wardlaw abroad, and think my sister-in-law a very lucky person? So do I. . . . Yes, there is a boy; but, of course he will go to school, and" Here the decided tones died away in the distance, and were lost in the hum of voices which now proceeded from the dining-room.

Had Nina followed the company downstairs, she would have heard plenty about Lord Wardlaw; for during the two first courses he and his mar-

CHILDREN IN THE LONDON SEASON.

riage, and his previous history, formed the chief subjects of conversation. There was but one opinion as to himself. He was *charming*. The verdict was unanimous. Opinions as to whether Lord Wardlaw or Mrs. Lyndsay was the "lucky one" were a little divided. Some thought the luck on his side, in possessing such a pretty charming wife as Colonel Middleton's sister. Others, sitting a good way from Colonel Middleton, thought it on hers. A young man like Lord Wardlaw, with a fair fortune: who might have married any of the pretty London girls of the day, had he been so disposed. Others aside to each other, thought a rich widow a great windfall. Others again, still aside, thought the boy a terrible stumbling-block. Some rejoiced at the constancy of affection displayed by Lord Wardlaw. "That sort of thing is so rare in these days." Colonel Middleton told the whole story of the early friendship from his end of the table, while his wife told it from hers. By degrees, the conversation branched off to other subjects, with which we have nothing to do. So now, while the champagne goes round, and the clatter of voices and laughter sounds

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up the staircase, let us return to the school-room, and follow the young lives there.

- It is nearly nine o'clock, and Cecily has gone to bed. Mademoiselle, still suffering from her headache, has also retired, and in the rapidly darkening school-room Nina sits alone. She has been reading by the fading light, and the book is still open in her hand; but now she is leaning against the window-sill, looking out into the street. It is an oppressive night, and both the windows are wide open. Not much to be seen of interest there: an organ below is playing a popular air, but otherwise the street is almost deserted, for the roll of dinner-carriages is over, and that of the later entertainments not yet begun. Truly the only thing of interest is the handsome little face itself.

The face is a curious mixture: the soft dreamy eyes contrast so sharply with the firm, I had almost said hard, little mouth. A varying face, for its earnest thoughtful expression now is as different as possible from that which stole over it on the staircase not half-an-hour ago. Sad that the sight of a mother should have the

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CHILDREN IN THE LONDON SEASON.

power to call up such an expression. But alas! was not a solitary instance. It seemed, indeed, if there were something antagonistic in the positions of mother and daughter; so utterly different was their organisation, that it appeared less that they should ever understand one another. Mutual love and forbearance would have done Patience on the one side and reverence on the other might have drawn them together; but happily these feelings were unknown by either mother or daughter.

No doubt Nina was not easy to understand, for she was she a winning or attractive child. No, she was as her mother said, "an odd child;" one of those children who go by the opprobrium "difficult"—God help them! for few others will.

Cold, proud, indifferent.

Let us watch her a little before we join in verdict ourselves.

The July evening is coming to a close. organ has strayed farther away. Every now then snatches of chorus' sound from Park Lane, the merry little street-boys return from bathing

the Serpentine. Everything speaks of the end of the busy day, and Nina rouses herself from her reverie, and looks at the school-room clock.

It is past nine, and she puts away her book, and prepares to leave the room. But first she stoops down and takes off her shoes. Then, very quietly, almost stealthily, the child opens the school-room door, and passes along the passage, and up the stairs.

Her bed-room door is open, and Cecily's voice is heard from within, singing little songs to herself, to beguile the time while she is waiting for her sister. But Nina brushes past, and turns down a passage which corresponds with the school-room one below. Where can the child be going?

Here a door stands partly open, and Nina hesitates a moment before she passes it. Voices and laughter from within, and the clatter of plates and dishes, intimate that the nurses are at supper, and very quietly she creeps past, as if afraid of being discovered. Very, very quietly, and enters with a noiseless step a darkened room a little farther on. A night-light burns dimly on the table, and

Nina stands by the door till her eyes get sufficiently accustomed to the subdued light to be able to distinguish the different objects in the room.

A big bed, a small bed, and two cribs, proclaim the bed-room nursery. The big bed is empty, but three sleeping children occupy the others.

In a little bed by itself lies a big rosy boy about five, and in the crib next the wall a rosy baby girl.

Without glancing at these two, Nina passes on to the crib on the other side of the big bed, and stands at its foot, motionless. A restless sleeper this. The bed-clothes are tossed about in every direction, the little face on the pillow is flushed, and the long fair hair all in disorder. He cannot have been asleep long, nor does he seem to sleep soundly now, for disjointed words proceed from his lips, and he stirs uneasily. He must, judging by the profusion of hair, and general aspect of the lovely little face, be at least three years old; his face and hands are scarcely as large as those of the baby-sister who sleeps so sound in the crib beside him. The little hand and arm that lie out-

the coverlet are thin and small, and sadly
the veins in the transparent forehead.

blue are

And now let us take one glance at the face of
the child who is cold, hard, indifferent.

Where is the look of haughty indifference with
which it received her mother's message? Where is
the look of supercilious contempt with which it
watched that mother on the stairs? Where is even
the firm tightly-compressed little mouth?

Gone! all gone!—all merged in an expression
of yearning tenderness, of passionate affection, which
pervades and beautifies the entire countenance.

The child's whole soul is in her face as she
gazes at her little invalid brother. Gazes, gazes, as
if she could never gaze enough.

Going to his side at last, she bends over him,
and tries to arrange the rumpled bed-clothes, and
to relieve the hot forehead of the tangled, dis-
ordered hair. Bending closer still, she impresses
tender kisses on his pillow, on the sheet, on his
hair; and, as she does it, she whispers softly, "Good-
night, Totty, good-night!"

Then returning to the foot of the crib, she stands there for a few minutes, as if to assure her- self his sleep is sound. It seemed as though she fears it is so light a slumber that he may waken any moment and find the nurses not yet come to bed, for she appears loth to leave him.

Is she going to keep a lonely vigil till that time shall come? for she twines her arms around the bars of his crib, and lays her head upon them.

No; she is only repeating to herself, ere she leaves him in the darkness, the old rhyme, slightly varied, with which many a nervous child has soothed itself to sleep amid the fancied terrors of a lonely room.

Four corners to his bed,
Four angels round his head,
One to watch, two to pray,
And one to keep all fears away.

The regular breathing of the other children is heard in the stillness as she stands there watching, if and the sound seems to irritate her a little, as their health and strength contrasted painfully in her mind with the frail little sleeper before her.

But Totty does not stir again, and she is satisfied.

Her dark eyes seem to glow with the intensity of the love within her, as she takes a farewell gaze, and without one glance at the other beds she retires as noiselessly as she came; turning once more ere she passes into the lighted passage, to kiss her hand to the little sleeper, and to murmur softly, "Good-night, Totty, good-night!" Then quickly and hastily she goes down the stairs, and regains her own room.

Night after night, unknown to all, suspected by none, does the child pay this noiseless visit. Night after night does the little figure steal up the staircase, shoes in hand, and disappear in the darkened room. She is always more or less in fear of detection, but never yet has she been discovered.

Mademoiselle always supposes her in her bedroom, Cecily supposes her with Mademoiselle; housemaids and nurses are alike busy at their supper; and so hitherto she has escaped.

It may be that He unto whom all hearts are open, and whose pity is equal to his power, ordered

that it should be so, and gave his angels charge concerning her, to keep all hindrances away.

It may be that He was leading the wayward child to Himself, through her love for her baby brother; lest in the lovelessness of the atmosphere in which she lived, the little heart should really come to be as cold and hard as it was there considered, and so should never rise into the experience of that higher love which is in itself both God and heaven.

"For it is through the gush of our human tenderness that the soul first learns its destiny divine; it is through a mortal yearning, unsatisfied, that the soul ascends, seeking a higher object; it is through our human affections that the immortal and the infinite in us reveals itself."

The voices of the ladies returning to the drawing-room came up the stairs half an hour after, and aroused Nina from her dreamless sleep. She woke with a beating heart, for she was startled and confused, and she dreamily fancied Totty must be ill, and that the voices she heard were those of the alarmed nurses. By degrees she remembered what

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it all meant, and with a sigh of relief she lay down again. But the moment's fear had unsettled her, and she could not get to sleep.

She lay, wondering whether the voices had disturbed Totty too; and if so, whether he would find the nurses come to bed or not. Vague fears haunted her of his lying awake frightened, and not able to make himself heard. She could not calm herself about it, except by repeating the soothing rhymes over and over again; and sleep overtook her, dreamily murmuring—

Four corners to his bed,
Four angels round his head,
One to watch, two to pray,
And one to keep all fears away.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Middleton's Rules and Regulations.

MRS. MIDDLETON was, as we have said, a woman of theory, and her theories on the subject of the education and training of children were very decided. Her system, as she imagined, combined the advantages of the old system and the advantages of the new.

"Children now-a-days," said Mrs. Middleton, "were too much made of, took too prominent a part in the household economy, and were taught to think themselves of too great importance. They came too forward altogether, and were too much with their parents, to the exclusion, on the one hand, of many topics of conversation; or to the hearing a great deal that was not intended for their ears, on the other. The nursery and the school-room were the proper places for them, regular walks with their nurses or governesses quite change

6

Thrown Together. I.

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enough, and fixed early hours for rising and going to bed."

Prompt obedience to herself she exacted; quick unanswering submission to every order. All very well in its way. But the fault in Mrs. Middleton's system was, that there was *no* confidence or love between her and her children—*no* interchange of thought and affection.

She did not see enough of them to understand them; she did not watch or study them at all; so that she failed to discover where her system fell short; or, indeed, that a system which succeeded with one child might *possibly* fail with another; that all children are not *alike*; and that where characters and temperaments differ, methods of training should differ also, or at least be modified and adapted.

Strong in the knowledge that her system had had great success with *her* three elder boys, she was firm in her own *confident* opinion that her theories were perfect, and *her* practice more perfect still.

It so happened, that *with her* three easy-going,

thick-skinned boys, it *had* all answered very well; but she failed to see that she had in her little daughters totally different characters to deal with.

Nina was a child who could have been led through her affections, had those affections been drawn out; but this "driving" system only stirred up her pride and self-will. Sensitive to the last degree, she had learnt to be ashamed of the deep feelings which she felt within her, and to call up pride to help her to overcome and conceal them: and that pride had now become so completely a second nature, that she daily acted an indifference to everything and everybody that she did not really feel.

Cecily, timid and nervous, was a child who needed protection and help, and who should have been encouraged to overcome her self-consciousness and fear of ridicule; and have been taught that she could depend upon her mother's love and assistance—instead of which she feared her, and never felt at ease in her presence.

Outwardly, they were no doubt well-behaved and submissive. But their good behaviour was

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merely a mask worn in their mother's presence, which concealed their real selves from her and from others. There was no deep feeling at work in their hearts. There was never any appeal made to their affections; to their sense of right, or their individual responsibility—no inculcation of principle, on which a superstructure of religion might be built. If they did wrong they were punished—that was all. Neither was punishment ever followed up by forgiveness and advice. They were never taught that their failings made their mother unhappy, and that for her sake they ought to try and not offend again—a doctrine which conveys so forcibly to young minds that their sins are displeasing to God, and that out of love to Him more than out of fear they should strive to overcome them. No! Nothing of all this. Nothing but the fear of punishment, and the dread of public remark. But, after all, it was not so much the training as the mother herself. Had her example been always good and attractive, her system might have succeeded better. Her own character was all unformed and undisciplined; she had not educated or trained herself,

therefore how was it possible she could rightly train and educate others. The fact was, she was intensely selfish. She was an only child and an heiress. She had always been indulged in everything, and been accustomed to have her own way, and to be worshipped and flattered by all. She had a strong will, a quick temper, and an immense idea of her own importance. She was clever, managing, and determined; worldly, and very ambitious. Was this a person likely to enter into all the difficulties and trials of child life?—to put herself in her children's place, and to view the unfolding chart of life with their wondering puzzled eyes? No! She had her place in the world, and the children had theirs. Hers immeasurably superior and important—theirs less than secondary, simply subservient to her, and to her will.

Some day it would be different, perhaps. As grown-up girls and boys she might hereafter allow them to assume some individuality; but at present they were just children—a mere flock of sheep to be driven according to her way, without any distinction. She made certain rules, and they were to

follow them—that was all. If they didn't, they were punished—there was no middle course. She was not fond of children. A child was to her raw material, out of which something might be made some day; but *as a child* it did not interest her. The society of children gave her no pleasure.

Perhaps this arose from idleness, perhaps from selfishness, perhaps from stupidity.

She found it a great trouble to provide answers to their questions, and was bored to find that when she had answered one it gave rise to another. She was too selfish to come down from the heights of her own mature reflections, and to lower herself to the level of the baby questioner. Perhaps, in spite of her vaunted cleverness, she was too stupid or too ignorant to satisfy their curiosity. It requires no small amount of knowledge to parry successfully the questions of an enquiring child-mind.

The questioning child is never the favourite in the nursery, because it is often beyond the nurse's power to satisfy its thirst for information; and so she is often floored, and feels lowered by having her ignorance exposed.

Anyhow, from whatever cause it arose, Mrs. Middleton was not fond of children; she did not understand them; she had not realized that self must be put on one side before she could really train or influence them; and the consequence was that she had no real influence over them, and they neither loved nor respected her.

Of direct attempts there was no lack. Lecture by the hour would Mrs. Middleton; precept upon precept, rule upon rule, she would sometimes show upon her little daughters when complaints against them were brought before her. But they saw her at times when she was not thinking of them, and they had, alas! learnt to discover her inconsistencies, and to compare the purity of her theories with the faultiness of her practice. What was the good, for instance, of her punishing them for an outbreak of temper, when they could see, by her flushing cheek and raised voice, that her own was not under control? Did they not intuitively feel that it was not so much that they had sinned, as that they had wounded their mother's *amour propre*, or irritated her nervous temper; and that they were suffering

from revenge, not punishment; that it was only because they were the weaker that they went to the wall, since the sin was the same on both sides?

Vain was her teaching while her conduct was at variance with it. For there is a great and important difference between direct and indirect influence, which is well defined thus: "Our direct efforts to teach may be contradicted by our lives, while the indirect influence is our very life."

Strict is the watch a mother should keep over herself in her children's presence, lest they lose belief in the goodness, justice, and love which is to lead them to God, and of which, till they know Him, she is to them the embodiment. Let them believe in one person, though all others fail them. She should be on her guard lest their sense of right and justice get marred by her inconsistency, their affections chilled by her changeability, or their minds confused in striving to reconcile her teaching with her daily conduct.

Surely a mother's *should* indeed be a *life of* prayer while contending with such difficulties as these, for she is but *human* herself. But with such

an end in view it is worth the struggle, for all through life her children will have the memory of at least one person whom they could safely believe in, and be helped by that recollection, even amidst all the sin and darkness around them, to have faith in the divinity of this human nature which our Saviour condescended to assume. In that other mother in our story, to whom we have only, as slightly alluded, was a bright pattern and example for ever before Mrs. Middleton; but her eyes were closed to her young sister-in-law's merits, and she saw no ways perfect but her own.

Magdalen Lyndsay had, in the training of her boy, acted in every way contrary to Mrs. Middleton's ideas, and Mrs. Middleton despised her system accordingly. But the fact was, Magdalen Lyndsay had no "system." Love and complete confidence existed between her and her boy, and on that foundation she built.

Mervyn had never had any inconsistencies confuse him in his mother, or anything to shake his abiding belief in her. He knew that when obedience was exacted from him which conflicted

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with his own wishes, that it was for the love of him, or for some wise reason, that it was demanded. He looked for, and expected, the cheering tone of encouragement, the bright smile of approval; and with the help of them, and for the sake of them, he made efforts to overcome his faults, the very idea of which would have been greek to Nina Middleton.

Magdalen had never brought Self to bear in any way against her boy; she had never allowed herself to be *personally* irritated by his faults, or *outwardly* vexed if her time was broken in upon.

Ten times out of *twenty* these are the real causes of children's *offences*. It is not so much *what* they are saying or *doing* at the time, as that they have chosen a time *which* is inconvenient to us for saying or doing *it*; and had it happened when we were disengaged, or better temper, we should have seen no offence in it. No wonder that children get puzzled when they find *that* what passed without remark one day is a terrible offence the next, and

looked upon as a crime yesterday with impunity to-day. had been alive to all these dangers; en to steer clear of them. All she rn was reverence and obedience; and had never, as yet, failed to render to be sure, had Nina; obedience as her mother knew. But herein e. Mervyn's character was as an o his mother, and she knew every part he could answer for him as for hers as a sealed book to hers; and if M thought she could answer for her, n her obedience, it was only beca ough about it at all. She had no m strength of character, the strength d will, or the power of resistance hich lay behind the girl's impassive she had of the powers of affect there equally hidden. one knew what went on in the heart who was called "odd, cold, unacc

No one guessed what depths of tenderness existed under her apparent indifference; walled in, and kept down by the sensitive pride which had become a second nature.

Long had they lain there dormant, unsuspected and uncalled for, till the birth of little Totty, the first of all Mrs. Middleton's children who had not been a highly satisfactory baby—a baby that she was proud to show if sent for—fine, forward, and healthy.

Till he appeared, Mrs. Middleton's babies had all been framed after the same pattern; had stood their vaccination well, cut their teeth at the proper time, ran alone when she thought it time they should do so, fallen into all her plans for their feeding and sleeping, and yielded to treatment directly if by any chance they fell ill.

But alas! poor little Totty was a sad exception to all this. A wailing, suffering baby from his birth, he ran counter to his mother's rules in every way. He was weeks getting over his vaccination; he had not attempted to cut every tooth late;

ge the others ran alone; and at two
had still to be put to sleep by being
l down the room. Perhaps this was
eton's eyes, the greatest offence of all
f her most stringent rules, and not
good one, that her babies should,
ge as possible, be put into bed, and
sleep by themselves. The others had
he way of it very soon, as healthy
but with Totty it was almost an im-
He would lie awake for hours crying
d and hushed like a baby.

g time Mrs. Middleton had persever-
were obliged to obey her, and poor
o be put into his crib awake, to cry
leep alone. But no one could bear
l of the delicate child proceeding fr-
a-nursery, and the nurses often br-
Middleton's rules. It was no diffi-
e she so seldom visited the nurse-
wn rules, and took it for granted
ed, but she was by no means
h the children to see that they
ed ;
poor
cry
to
om
oke
cult
ries.
they
often
were

carried out. So it was *only* by chance that she every now and then discovered that Totty was still put to sleep. Each time she put a stop to it, and laid down stricter regulations than ever. But it was no use. Totty suffered from want of sleep or exhaustion from crying; and even the doctor at last told Mrs. Middleton that the child must, for his health's sake, be humoured, till he was older and stronger. It was her first defeat. As he grew older she renewed her attempts to get him into better habits, but seldom with any success.

It was never clearly given out what was the matter with Totty; but the real truth was there was something the matter with his spine, which the doctors greatly feared would one day develop into distinct disease of the spine. But it had by no means reached that stage yet. He could stand alone now; but though nearly four years old, he rarely attempted to walk, neither did the doctors wish that he should. His chest was delicate, too, and he had once had *an* attack of inflammation of the lungs, which had *left* him very liable to catch bad colds.

MIDDLETON'S REGULATIONS.

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lovely little fellow, and singularly in-
ough he might fall short of his brothers
many ways, in face there was not one
any way compare with him. But a
can like Mrs. Middleton was not

She looked on to the future, and
day would never come when she
ud of this son as she would be of
ad been in the case of a girl, it would
ttered so very much; but a delicate

Totty's deficiencies would not have been
if he had not, when he was eighteen
been succeeded by a baby sister who
ame up to the standard of the Middle-
was even stronger, finer, and more
walked, in short, in all the paths
had marked out; and who raced
Totty with such speed, that now,
half, she ran about out-of-doors, while
was driven in a perambulator.

as of some age when Totty was born;

and to begin with, the tiny ailing child, who seemed always crying and in pain, excited her pity; it was such a new thing in their nursery. With a child's quickness, she soon began to suspect that her mother was a little bit annoyed by it, and was rather ashamed of the puny, pale-faced baby. Mooning over it by herself, the suspicion became daily more confirmed in her mind; and any chance word that Mrs. Middleton let fall upon the subject strengthened it, till at last it became a certainty. From thinking Totty was overlooked, she grew to think he was despised; and from allowing to herself that he was despised, she persuaded herself that he was ill-treated. Then woke there up in her heart the pity that is akin to love. Then came the sense of loving protection towards the sickly child, and the determination to take its part against everybody, and to be to it the defender that it seemed to her to need so much. Alas! that so pure a feeling should have been mixed with antagonistic ill-will towards her mother; so that Nina was both at her best, and at her worst, when she loved her little brother.

Day by day her love for him deepened. It grew with her growth, and strengthened with her length; while, with characteristic pride, she strove to hide it from her mother and from everyone. It was her cherished secret, and such it remained; and no one, except perhaps the nurse, guessed

Nina's character in the house was that she was fond of children; that she did not care for her younger brother and sisters.

Her mother often remarked, "Some girls make nice little elder sisters, but Nina doesn't seem to care for the younger ones at all." Of such remarks Nina would take no notice, only pursing up her mouth, and hugging her secret tighter than anything, and hugging to think how wrong they all were; and her expression of countenance would be taken for an expression of temper, and her mother be confirmed in her opinion that she was a most odd, unaccount-

As she grew older and Nina loved him more and more, she grew so sensitive about him that her

heart would beat when his name was mentioned, and his constitution discussed; and to hide it, she always put on an air of indifference whenever he was spoken of, which gave a very different impression to the outsider than the real one.

When Totty was succeeded by another baby, she felt him to become more hers than ever. Deeper and deeper grew her love and her pity, when she saw the other child wax stronger and finer month by month, while poor little Totty seemed to make no progress at all; and angry feelings would rise in her heart when she heard one child held up to the deterioration of the other. She could not bear to hear them compared, and her heart would beat loudly when she heard hints every now and then dropped in the nursery that the baby would walk first. How anxiously she watched them both; and how to the last she hoped against hope!

Yet, as we have said, at eighteen months the baby ran about everywhere, while Totty looked on from his perambulator. No one knew the storm of

ling which swept over the child when Totty was
nly overlooked, by being left in the nursery,
le the baby was sent for to see visitors in the
iving-room.

Poor child! the complications of troubles that
went through on his account were many; but
in spite of them all, it was better for her and
ier than that indifference to everything and
body which had distinguished her before she
a Totty on whom to expend her affection. And
er mother had never noticed the change,
as perfectly ignorant of the girl's power of
on!

s. Middleton had indeed a good deal to dis-
She was content, so far, with the outward
g of good behaviour Nina wore in her pre-
but she had yet to learn what an obedience
which is not founded on religion, love, or
n. There was an expression sometimes in
ome little face which would have led an
erver to wonder how far that outward
ould avail if any real cause of antagonism
r arise, and to fancy that, if it should

ever be thrown off, it would be war to the knife between mother and daughter! Whether such a fancy would be correct or not, the events of the story will show.

CHAPTER IV.

The new Relation at Luncheon.

THERE was something the matter with Mademoiselle the next morning at breakfast, for she was bad moody, and hardly answered Nina when she asked her if she didn't think the butter was better iced than usual.

It was evident that Nina was rather in disgrace, Mademoiselle's manner to Cecily was quite different. Seeing how matters stood, Nina, with her difference, simply refrained from any further conversation, and ate her breakfast in silence.

There was a new-comer at breakfast—the thirteen-year-old boy, by name Edmund. He had been in his school-room life by breakfasting with them, and taking his morning walk with them, by way of familiarising him with the language, as no other was allowed to be present at such times. Conversation at breakfast under all these circumstances, flow rapidly.

Edmund, to whom
the charm of nove
ruddy countenanc
own part in the
vous plait," when
and "Merci" (by
"Mercy"), when
long sentence
Cecily elicited
talking rubbish

Cecily was,
a fit of gigglin
Mademoiselle
sent them all
in a terrible
through a c
band, on the
room party
them. The
in front, N
come to th
calls the li
to join her

THE NEW RELATION AT LUNCHEON.

"What's the matter with Mademoiselle, Cecily?"
 "I don't know. She was all right at breakfast
 ere you came down, and was talking away to
 about her headache and how she couldn't get
 sleep, and all that sort of thing." Nina was
 t. She saw now the reason of the gloom.
 had omitted to ask after Mademoiselle's
 ache!

"What made her talk about it?" she asked
 ntly.

"Oh, I asked her if it was gone when she came
 " answered Cecily, "and so then she told me
 out it."

ow this was a very old offence of Nina's.
 could make up her mind to ask people
 headaches, and other little ailments.
 e most simple everyday affair to most people,
 great difficulty to her.

ear this little heroine of mine will seem to
 people a very disagreeable character, and
 I think her mother fully justified in holding
 union. It will, indeed, require the power of
 the soul of goodness in things evil" to make

them a little patient with her. But so many weaknesses spring from perverted good, and so many follies have their root in virtues, that perhaps the germ of good in the child's peculiar disposition may be found, if searched for. As extravagance springs oftentimes from lavish generosity; gossip, and curiosity from an over-kindly interest in the affairs of others; so perhaps this want of courtesy and kindness in Nina might spring from the innate truthfulness of the child's nature, over-strained and far-fetched though it might be. She was afraid of seeming more interested in the person than she really was; she could not say she was sorry when she knew she was not really grieved. Her idea of being sorry was something so very different. She did not, she told herself, know how to *look* while the person was answering her question. She couldn't be affected, and put *on* looks. If she might just run in and say "How is your headache?" and rush away without waiting for the answer, she wouldn't mind half so much; but the standing there listening, and then not knowing what to say next, or how soon to begin talking of something else, all this

THE NEW RELATION AT LUNCHEON.

courteous enquiry a very difficult matter to Middleton.

At any rate it is too late now," she told her-
s she walked silently along by Cecily's side.
cily was, as usual, full of talk.

say, Nina, you know a tandem, and you
a four-in-hand?"

es," said Nina, "what of them?"

hat do you call a thing that is neither a
nor a four-in-hand?"

extreme vagueness of the question made
sitate.

tell you all that it *isn't*," continued Cecily,
en you can tell me what it *is* easier.

arouche, nor a brougham, nor a dog-cart;
break, nor an omnibus, nor a t-cart, nor a

car, nor a waggonette, nor a landau, nor a
age, nor a cabriolet, nor Oh

so tired! Well, Nina, it's
what can it be?"

is it like?" asked Nina, "and where did
"

t three horses, one in front of the other,"

answered Cecily, "and I saw it in the mews from my bed-room window. I'm sure it's quite a new thing, for I never saw it before."

"I can't think what it can be," said Nina.

"Perhaps it will be there when we go home," said Cecily. "I *wanted* so to see it start, but Made-moiselle called me just as the last horse was put in."

They were just entering Kensington Gardens as she spoke, and Edmund, released from Made-moiselle, came running up to ask Cecily to play at horses, and the little sisters' conversation came to an end.

Kensington Gardens and Rotten Row, at that early hour on a summer's morning, present a very different appearance to Kensington Gardens and Rotten Row a few hours later in the day. From half-past eight to half-past ten or eleven, both are quite given up, as it were, to children.

Before the heat of the day has begun—while the trees wear that peculiar bright green which the day's dust will turn into brown, while the morning air is fresh and sweet—reigns all along the length

the Serpentine what may be called "the children's hour." There are tiny ponies, with tiny riders, sometimes led by grooms walking at the side, sometimes connected to big horses and carried by old coachmen by long leading-reins. Babies in high chairs, jogging along close by the rail-panels, where the nurse walks; plucky little boys tearing along at a hand-gallop; little girls with streamers in their hair racing after them, as quick as the groom who follows. They mostly laugh and talk as they go along, and their voices sound merry in the summer air, and their bright hair looks brighter in the summer sunshine.

Alongside, within the railings, are all the little children. They look so cool and fresh in their holland costumes, and shady hats—partially covered by the babies, who lie lazily back in their high chairs. The mothers, under the great shady awnings. There is a pleasant hum of voices and laughter all about, mingled with the clink of the water-carts. The Serpentine looks cool and clear, gleaming

in the sun; and the din of London traffic is so mellowed by distance, as to be rather soothing than otherwise.

The scene altogether is so different to what it will be a few hours later, when to the lightheartedness and carelessness of the "children's hour" will succeed one known well enough without description; when youth and beauty and fashion will crowd into the park, bringing with them cares, and aims, and interests unknown as yet to the chattering throng in full possession now.

Punctual at eleven the little Middletons left the Park, and proceeded home. The town was beginning to stir as they reached Grosvenor Gate, and Cecily sighed deeply at the thought of returning to lessons. She flew to her window directly she got into her bed-room, but there was no sign as yet of the carriage she had mentioned to Nina.

Lessons occupied the rest of the morning, and at a quarter to two they were sent upstairs to get ready for luncheon. Cecily's head was out of the window in a moment, and as quickly drawn in.

"Nina! here it is, just come home; the three horses and all! Do come and look."

Nina was washing her hands, and couldn't come directly.

"There are two gentlemen besides grooms. One that young one we so often see, and a new one. He looks like a 'How-are-you?' but I'm not quite sure. Now they've got out, and are patting the horses. Do come!"

Nina advanced to the window, and a deep colour overspread her face when, in the new gentleman, she recognised Lord Wardlaw. "Do you know what it's called?" exclaimed Nina, excitedly; "isn't it a jolly carriage?"

"No, I don't," Nina said absently, her eyes in the figure below; "and Cecily, you'll be you don't get ready."

remained gazing at Lord Wardlaw, and of Mervyn. She felt almost sure he was longed to write and tell Mervyn so. He seemed so kind about one of the horse's other seemed to be pooh-poohing it, but Lord

Wardlaw seemed to be insisting on having it attended to, and examined it carefully himself. Then a little child ran out of the stables, and he turned round and patted its head, and stooped down and talked to it. Nina thought she saw him put his hand in his pocket and put something into the child's hand, but was not quite sure. Then he spoke to his friend, and pointed to the house.

"He is saying he is coming here to luncheon," thought Nina, and she blushed.

The other man seemed to say he would come too; and they walked off together, arm-in-arm. But as they went Nina noticed that Lord Wardlaw did not forget to turn round and nod to the little child he had been talking to, who stood in the middle of the road staring after them.

All this time Cecily had not begun to get ready; she had been so taken up with the horses and the new kind of carriage. To her horror the gong sounded, and Mademoiselle came in to fetch them.

"Oh, what shall I do!" she exclaimed.

Mademoiselle answered, she must come down alone, as it was better for one to be late than three.

THE NEW RELATION AT LUNCHEON.

so she and Nina proceeded downstairs, leaving Cecily in mortal terror. It was such a terrible thing to be late for luncheon. When they reached the dining-room they found no one there, and the maid informed them that Mrs. Middleton would be down for ten minutes or so, but had sent them away as they were not to wait for her.

"And zee Cornel?" asked Mademoiselle.

The Colonel was engaged with two gentlemen, and would be in directly.

Nina felt her heart beat at the thought of so soon seeing Mervyn's step-father; and she wondered how she would sit. She had herself Mademoiselle beside her, and Cecily's vacant place on the other side. She hoped he would sit exactly opposite, so that she might have a good look at him.

The door opened, and in came the three gentlemen. Nina, with the flush which excitement lent her cheek, was looking very handsome, and she sprang up and kissed her.

"Good morning, my little woman."
 "Law, this is my eldest daughter."

Nina,

this is Lord Wardlaw. Mr. Leigh—M
ton!”

And Colonel Middleton sat down. This was all against the rules. Mr. Middleton never allowed any introductions to him and particularly disliked Nina being introduced in this way. With her it was, how do you do to this gentleman like the above introduction was quite against principles. Mr. Leigh bowed as if to get up, and made some civil remark as if Mrs. Middleton would have been if she had been there. Colonel Middleton, however, thought it rather a good joke.

“We shall have her out and in no time,” he said.

“The sooner the better,” answered Mr. Leigh.

But it was all lost upon her. They were fixed on Lord Wardlaw and she would remember her. She was in no doubt.

“We made friends in the

said, in the kind voice which had attracted her before, coming up and taking her hand.

Nina got very red, and shy, and didn't know what to say; but she was conscious of a feeling of pleasure when Lord Wardlaw seated himself by her side.

"Something wrong, Wardlaw!" said Colonel Middleton, as he saw Lord Wardlaw looking enquiringly at the silver mug and diminutive knife and fork in front of him.

Now the last thing Nina wished was to drive Lord Wardlaw away, but between shyness and truthless she did her best to do the very thing she did not want.

"You've got Cecily's place," she said, bluntly.

"I'm sure I beg Cecily's pardon," he said, smiling. "What had I better do?"

"Nonsense, my dear fellow, don't trouble yourself. Have the things changed."

"So, to Nina's great satisfaction, the arrangements are not altered."

"In what way, where is Miss Cecily?" said Colonel Middleton.

"Late for luncheon! Lucky for her."

mamma is late too." And Colonel Middleton winked at Nina as he spoke.

But Nina did not smile. There was a loyalty in the child's nature, and a truthfulness which made anything underhand impossible to her. She knew she would not have smiled if her mother had been present, and so she was too honest to do it just because she was not there. She kept her eyes on her plate. None of this was lost upon Lord Wardlaw. Perhaps it was some qualities of this kind that had attracted him years ago to Magdalen Middleton.

At this juncture Cecily, looking shy and frightened, was seen trying to glide into the room unobserved. The change in her face when she saw her mother was not there was very remarkable.

"Come here, you rogue, and give me a kiss," said Colonel Middleton; "what do you mean by being late?"

Cecily sprang to his side, delighted with her reception.

"Oh papa, it was looking at the carriage. I quite forgot to get ready."

Middleton was rather anxious to
out before their new relation, and
y to converse.

here, between me and Mr. Leigh,
self."

vicinity of one of the heroes of the
o much for Cecily. She quite jumped
and exclaimed: "Oh! how very funny!
ering who it was."

ave not had long to wonder," said her
u have hardly been a minute in the

ut I was wondering before," said Ce-

ody laughed.

do you mean?" asked Colonel Mid-
When have you seen that gentleman be-

s watching him while I was getting ready
on," said Cecily. "That's what made me

n my word," said her father, "I call this
ing quite romantic."

"What do you call it?" exclaimed Cecily eagerly; "that is just what I want to know."

"Come, come," said Colonel Middleton, "you must explain yourself. What do you mean?"

"I mean," she said, "that I want to know what you call a carriage that is not a waggonette, nor a t-cart, nor a tandem, nor——"

"My goodness, child!" exclaimed her father, "one would think you had come straight from the mews!"

"So I have," she answered, "at least. . . ." and she broke off, astonished at the laughter with which her speech was received, and dismayed at a reproachful sound which broke from Mademoiselle. Nina now roused herself to appear every moment, and expecting her mother to get into disgrace.

"Our bed-room window looks out on the mews, papa," she said, "and Cecily is very fond of watching what goes on there. Not our stables, you know, but a gentleman's; Mr. Leigh's, I suppose, as I sometimes see him there. There was a new kind of carriage there this morning, and Cecily has been

now what it is called. It's
one in front of the other, and
h and you," she added, turn-
Wardlaw, "getting out of it this morn-

at's called a harum-scarum," said Lord
ndly.

ant a clear sensible answer, I always
of Nina," said Colonel Middleton.
harum-scarum sort of creature yourself,
and it's just the sort of carriage for

l be delighted to give Miss Cecily a
ine," said Mr. Leigh.
shouldn't I like it!" exclaimed Cecily.
her hands; and her face beamed with

what?" said a very decided voice, as the
ned.

y's face clouded over with an expression
her eyes dropped, and she went on eating
er. Colonel Middleton looked uneasy, and
turbed; for Mrs. Middleton had entered the

room. She greeted both guests with warmth, especially Lord Wardlaw, and took her seat at the head of the table.

"I feel as if I have disturbed a conversation," she said blandly; "I heard such a babel of voices as I came along."

"We were talking about harum-scarums," said Lord Wardlaw.

"I have a great dislike to that kind of foolish carriage," said Mrs. Middleton. "I always think a young man must be either very idle or very foolish who sets up anything of the kind. I shall never allow my sons to do such a thing."

There was rather an awkward silence after this speech. Mr. Leigh looked very uncomfortable; he was very young, not much more than a boy, and he dreaded Mrs. Middleton's scorn.

There was a twinkle in Lord Wardlaw's eye, and he was the first to speak.

"I am afraid, Mrs. Middleton, you will have a very poor opinion of me when I tell you I have been driving in one this morning."

Now nothing could make Mrs. Middleton think

and Wardlaw. He was in the highest
 answered graciously, "It would take a
 to make me alter my opinion of Lord
 and I am quite sure idleness and folly
 be mentioned in connection with his
 me other motive must have been at

ly drove with a friend to prevent his
 his neck," suggested Colonel Middleton,

Mr. Leigh, who blushed crimson.
 re Cecily, who had been struggling hard
 it for some minutes, broke into such
 ling that the conversation was brought to
 termination.

Middleton could hardly believe her
 turning indignantly towards her to order
 of the room, when Lord Wardlaw inter-

must intercede," he said. "This conversa-
 ming so close upon that which preceded
 en a little too much for the child. Will
 me to explain it to you, and, meanwhile, over-
 the transgression for this time—as the

favour I have asked on entering the added in a lower tone; and Mrs. Middleton gave in.

It would be hard to say whether Mr. Cecily was the most relieved by this arrangement. The former had feared Lord Wardlaw was going to declare him the owner of a harum-scarum, and Cecily had been in agonies. Nina, too, had been on thorns; but her opinion of Lord Wardlaw was higher and higher, and as she left the dining-room she told herself that, far from being to be pitied, Mervyn was to be envied on the acquisition of so charming a step-father.

There was a feeling of freedom all over the house that afternoon, for Mrs. Middleton and her husband went to a breakfast soon after four o'clock, and were not expected home till late at night. Extra strictness is apt to produce eye-service, and Mrs. Middleton's household was no exception to the rule. Everyone, from the governess down to the footman, children included, felt as if a weight were lifted off their minds, and began to turn over in their thoughts

avail themselves of the opportunity
doing something different to usual.

When the cat's away
The mice do play,

house in the establishment thought
ame. Mademoiselle went off to tea
, leaving the school-room under Nina's
head nurse went to the play, deputing
s to the nurserymaid. Cecily and Ed-
tly tea was over, made an inroad into
room, and amused themselves by look-
photograph-books, &c., which were, as
d to them; and Nina went up to the
d carried Totty into her bed-room to
evening with her. Cecily also made
amination of all the invitations in the
ass over the chimney-piece, and tried
how many times her father and mother
ne out that week. Meanwhile Edmund
the balcony, climbed over into the adjoin-
and peeped in at the neighbour's windows,
sound of niggers coming down the street

distracted them both, and they flew off news to Nina and Totty.

She was sitting on the floor with her in her arms, talking softly to him little songs; and when the other their news, she answered sharply their care about niggers. For she resented their noisy entrance had stolen her precious child in her lap.

The animation, however, which pale little face at the news, made bending her head over him, she derly,

"Would Totty like to see them?"

"What are they like?" asked Totty.

"They are black men, darling, and dance."

Totty shuddered.

Evidently he had not been prepared for the nature of the entertainment.

"Must I really go?" he said, prepared for the

"Oh yes, Totty," said Edmund, "they're jolly men, you know."

meeting the appealing glance of the
s, settled it for him in a moment.
arms round him, she assured him that
nothing should make him see anything
e.

"a muff," said Edmund; but fortunately
a did not hear.

and Cecily ran off again, and the bro-
er were left alone.

happier without them, ain't we, darling?
o on looking at the pictures."

as it got later, and he grew weary, she
is head on her shoulder and sang softly
the gathering twilight.

after song he called for, joining in some-
self, but for the most listening quietly, and
the events of the tales contained in the
old ballads with eager interest.

crowning favourite was kept to the last, and
wly and distinctly, that he might follow the

THROWN TOGETHER.

Lord Thomas
 He was
 A forester bold
 And hunted
 The king's brown deer,
 And Eleanor
 She

Was a faire maiden,
 And Lord Thomas
 He

Loved her dear.

On and on, through the twelve or thirteen stanzas,
 of which the ballad is composed.

Totty was half asleep towards the end, but
 kindled into sudden enthusiasm at the thrilling con-
 summation.

He cut off
 His brown wife's head,
 Own it against the wall!!
 And threw it away

"Oh, Nina! did he really?"
 This question would always come whenever the
 verse was sung; and Nina, seeing the shrinking in
 his eyes, would always answer,
 "No, darling, not really; it's only a tale."
 She had once said story; but this had so con-

falsehood in Totty's mind, and made
 of how far Nina herself might be im-
 truth, that she had since substituted

"de, darling, that's all."

a joke, Nina?"

ling, it's a kind of joke."

of a sort of a joke," he would repeat

sly; "isn't it, Nina?"

tried leaving out the verse altogether,

s discovered this and asked for it.

fear, it fascinated him, and he would

world have allowed her to miss it.

gain," he said sleepily, just as she had

ed the end of the fourteenth verse; and

urmuring, began all over again.

s fetched to bed at seven, and then she

joined the others on the drawing-room

CHAPTER V.

The Hero's Home.

"HERE! Beth-Gelert. Here! halloa, old fellow!"

The hills all **around** caught up the sound of the fresh young voice, **and** echoed it from one to the other.

"Not there! **old Stupid!** Here!" rang out the merry tones again, **and** again the hills reverberated, "Not there! **old Stupid!** Here!"

And then such **a** ringing laugh pealed through the air, that the **old** hills sounded mad with joy as they took it up, **and** repeated it again and again.

Mervyn Lyndsay **put** down his books on a bit of rock, **and** bounded lightly up the sides of one of the hills, till he **reached** a spot from whence he could command **a** better view of the surrounding country; **and** there **he** stood, shading his eyes with his hand from the **setting** sun, **and** looking eagerly round in search of **something**.

The old Welsh hills looked down admiringly

figure and the bright young face—
things to be seen in that secluded

the dog Beth-Gelert, who, confused
had been careering along in the op-
n to join his young master, and who
given up their meeting as a bad job,
at full speed towards Glen-Mervyn, the
home.

hidden away among the trees to the left,
the chimneys could be seen, even from
nence where Mervyn now stood. See-
the position of affairs, with another
, the boy bounded down the hill again,
his books, and ran at full speed towards
hoping to overtake the dog. By some
through a plantation, probably known
himself, he reached the stables in a few
where, on glancing at the stable clock,
expressed astonishment, and he increased

ing a back door, he ran through some pas-
and emerged into a large old-fashioned hall,

THROWN TOGETHER.

decorated with antlers and banners, and adorned with figures of old knights in armour. Then, pushing open a heavy oak door, he entered a long low drawing-room, and, throwing down his books and hat on the nearest table, he advanced to a bow window at the other end of the room, and exclaimed:

"Oh mother, darling! I'm sorry I'm so late. I hope I haven't kept you waiting for tea."

The lady whom he addressed was sitting in the bow window, with an open letter in her hand, apparently lost in thought. Her head was turned towards the window, and her eyes were wandering over the beautiful Welsh country, which stretched away beyond the gardens and pleasure-grounds. She was quite young, and probably looked even younger than she really was; too young, in fact, to be the mother of the well-grown boy who stood by her side. So deep was her absorption, that *she did not* even hear Mervyn's noisy entrance; and it was not till his voice sounded close to her that she woke from her reverie, and then she turned round with a start, and exclaimed:

"darling? how you startled me!"

unfeignedly astonished.

"Why of course it is me! Who else

," said Mrs. Lyndsay, "I don't know,

who else it could be; but I don't think

ing you so soon."

"echoed Mervyn; "why I am so dread-

at I thought you would be wondering

come of me! Why, mother! do you

half-past five?"

ossible?" said his mother; but she still

her absently, and her eyes seemed to

esistible inclination to wander again to

mountains.

"All me, dear," she continued, as with an

hook off her reverie, and rose from her

is it makes you so late? And, my child,

ou are!" she concluded, laying her hand

s flushed cheek.

e moved from her chair, the letter, which

lying on her lap, fell to the ground, and

he picked it up and gave it to her, he could

not help seeing that she flushed slightly, hastily took it from his hand. He was a moment, but he soon forgot the passing excitement of relating his adventures to Gelert, to which his mother listened with usual interest and animation.

Magdalen Lyndsay, as the reader is aware, was a widow, and Mervyn was her only son. She had married early a man many years her senior, and he had died eighteen months after, leaving her the sole guardian of her son and of his property. She would not glance at her individual history from the time of her husband's death.

It seemed to her her duty to live herself, and to bring up her boy, among his own people, and in his forefather's home; and so, in spite of the objections raised by her relations, and especially by her brother, she settled always to spend eight months of the year at Glen-Mervyn. Colonel Middleton represented to her the loneliness of such an arrangement; "buried alive" as he called it, in a solitary part of Wales, with a child who was too young to be a companion. But she resisted all his attempts to induce her to

in London, and to content herself only with her husband's confidence. She promised she would go to London for four months in the year, and all her relations would visit her at Glen-Mervyn, whenever they felt inclined; and for the rest of her life, she said, if she could not be contented with her beautiful home and plenty of occupation, youth, and health with which to enjoy it, she thought she must be a very poor creature.

Her brother, who looked upon her as a child, could not at all see the force of this argument. "Really, Magdalen," he said, "you must be excited if you think the estate cannot get on well without you. A better-ordered, better-managed property cannot be; and surely a landlord, who has lived so many years upon it, does not require you to tell him what to do."

"All very true," his sister answered; "but I have great faith in the master's eye."

"Master's eye, yes," he repeated contemptuously; "but the eye of a girl of your age is not exactly the same thing. And what on earth can you, who have lived all your life in a London street, know about managing a property."

"You forget, Rowley, that I have been married eighteen months, and lived all that time on the very property of which you are speaking."

"Eighteen months! your experience must be vast, truly!"

"Greater than you think, perhaps," said Magdalen, as her thoughts reviewed those eighteen months of close companionship with a man, who, though old enough to be her father, had always insisted on her taking interest in his pursuits; and by this means had instilled into her mind much that she would never have dreamt of enquiring into; for which knowledge, little as it had interested her at the time, she was grateful now, since it would enable her to undertake her new duties.

"As to the dulness," she added, "I am used to

Mervyn, with her boy, others, was to her, by had led there, suffused enjoyment; and that the old Welsh home, of trying to satisfy and be satisfied, would be this she could not, and fore she broke off her had said too much.

"I don't understand Middleton; "nor can voluntarily exiling to grow morbid and un before your time."

His sister laughed

"You must try to often to stay with Lydia must look home, to come and with as many children

And so the affair be renewed again

—her life was neither empty nor dull. Useful, responsible, powerful, and respected, what more did she want? Only affection; and even that was hers; for as her boy grew on, he developed such strong affections, and such devotion to herself, that she had no longing to soothe, and no feeling unsatisfied. He showed a care and a thought for her beyond his years—a protecting kind of love which was very touching in a boy of his age.

From his earliest childhood he had been accustomed to be told—"Take care of her, Mervyn; you are all she has." "Remember, Mervyn, she has no one but you." And such admonitions had sunk into his childish heart, and brought forth abundant fruit as years went on. He seemed completely to understand his position of "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." He was full of little cares, little attentions; wonderfully thoughtful for her, and careful of her; unselfish as a woman; obedient to her slightest wish. He had never given her pain in his life, had ever treated her with reverence, and his childish faults she had always been able to reach through his affections. Some-

where her boy's good was concerned, Magdalen never thought of herself.

Considering all this, it may well be imagined that Mervyn should be rather surprised at her not discovering he **was** late; at her admission that he had startled her; and at her exclamation, "Is that *you*, darling?" As if in wide Wales it could be anyone else! He thought over it as he sat in the pretty drawing-room after they had had their tea, and his mother had gone upstairs to put on her riding-habit; and his reflections were not altogether pleasant. What could she have been thinking of so earnestly when he came in? What was that letter she had in her hand, to which she did not make any allusion? Why had she seemed so anxious to recover it when it fell from her hand? Was it all connected with something he was not to know? It was so unusual to find her doing nothing—she was always occupied about something. Seldom had he seen her so abstracted. Thinking of this, it for the first time crossed his mind that she had been rather thoughtful ever since they returned to Glen-Mervyn from London, three weeks ago. Several times he remem-

over them? What misfortune *could* there be as long as they were well and together? Unless The old bug-bear—school! Could his officious uncle be urging his being sent there at once, instead of waiting, as had always been decided, till next Christmas?

Mervyn was accustomed to his uncle's coming forward on every occasion to further his being sent to school, and always greatly resented it. What other misfortune could be impending, if not *this*?

He brooded over it, making himself quite miserable, till a sound reached his ears, which reassured him at once. It was his mother's voice from her window over-head, singing as she dressed; and the voice was so gay, so ringing, that Mervyn forgot his fears directly, and felt his spirits rise with the clear high notes of her song, till he forgot everything in the pleasure of listening to it. His mother would not sing like that if sorrow were impending. His mother would not sing like that if he were going to be taken from her.

And with a sigh of relief he lay back in an arm-chair, and ^{thought} himself he had been frightened

cupant, since early morning, but herself. There was work on one table, books on another; the piano was open, and the leaves of a piece of music fluttered in the soft wind that blew in at the window, as if some one had lately risen from it. There were flowers in different parts of the room, arranged in a sort of natural luxuriance peculiar to a lady, to which few others can ever attain. So unlike, thought Mervyn, the stiff little rows of flowers in the vicar's "parlour," one row red, one blue, one yellow, without a leaf or a morsel of green to relieve the mass of colour. As unlike his mother's arrangement as the vicar's prim maiden sister was unlike his mother herself.

The big bow-window opened on to the garden, and there again his mother's taste was displayed in the pretty laying out of the beds, and harmony of colour. There was a pair of gardening gloves, and a watering-pot lying by one of the beds; everywhere showed signs of life and employment, though he knew for certain that no one but herself had been there all day.

A light step sounded on the oak floor outside,

CHAPTER VI.

Why Mervyn and his Mother were late for Dinner.

It was a lovely summer evening as mother and son rode off from the house. Their way lay through the wildest and most beautiful part of the property; the sun was not yet beginning to set. Conversation never flagged for a moment; questions and answers followed in quick succession. The hills echoed their merry laughter, and the sound of Mervyn's shouts to Beth-Geleert. The sun had sunk to rest some time before they turned their faces homeward. They rode slowly back to Glen-Mervyn, in the soft twilight; every now and then disturbed in their conversation to bid good-night to the passers-by in their picturesque Welsh attire, returning from their day's work; or even to rein up their horses altogether, while Mrs. Lyndsay stopped to enquire into the welfare of those more particularly known to her.

she to tell him that which she has to tell? It is now nearly a fortnight since the question first presented itself to her mind, and she has found no answer yet.

The letter received that afternoon has shown her that she must lose no time; nay, that if possible, he must be told this very night. "Oh, no," says a voice in the mother's heart; "no, not to-night; let him have one day more! He is so gay, so light-hearted this evening; his laugh is so ringing, his dear eyes so bright. No! not to-night! not to-night! It may rain to-morrow, and he may be less gay; and when the wind sighs round the mountains, and the rain drips against the window, making him dull and listless, it will be easier for him to hear what she has to say. But to-night it is so sweet and fair; the air is so balmy, and all nature seems so gay. The birds and insects are singing and rejoicing; let him share in the gladness to-night. He must not be the one sad thing under the summer sky! Let him have one more evening in the garden with his mother all his own. ... What a dear right face it is! The sunny

through it all once more. First, the quiet life with her father, in their London home—even, uneventful; she the only young thing there, with no companions but the two old men. Then the days when she first knew Charlie Digby. What a charm his society had brought into her life, even before love grew up in her heart, when a closer acquaintance showed him to be all that was manly and true! Then had followed the intuitive conviction that he loved her, and the contented waiting on from day to day till he should speak, while she painted the scene of the happy future she felt so certain lay before her. Then the rude shock of his sudden departure without word or sign, without farewell; the sudden conviction that she had deceived herself, and been deceived; the bitter pain of the loss of his love, mingled with the wounded pride at being forsaken. Then the cold blank of life without a future; the lack of interest in everything; the loss of faith not only in him, but in the truth, and the virtue and the manliness of which he had been to her the embodiment; the return to the dull monotonous life with the old men. Then had

And Magdalen, torn from all her accustomed moorings, felt herself drifting out into a sea of darkness and doubt.

From such shipwreck as this her boy's lips on her forehead saved her; and the tears which his caresses brought to her eyes, while they dimmed her outward vision, dispelled her mental blindness, and she saw one light in the darkness, one spar to which she might cling—her child!

In the confusion of images which had bewildered her, his at least stood clear and well defined, consistent, loving, and unchanged; and whatever other duties she had mistaken or left undone, to this at least she had been faithful, and had performed it well. In all the landscape behind her, his figure was the clearest and the most familiar. Her years of motherhood extended over a space of time, compared to which her early friendship seemed a moment, and her married life to shake off her very thought of him enabled her to return to the present misty retrospection, and to return to the present moment. The dim figures fled away, and that of her boy took their place. They might seem

heart of how her news would affect him. As she thought of how completely he had had her to himself all these years, and how accustomed he had always been to look upon her as his exclusive possession, the fear increased, and she resolved to put off the announcement for the present. She had gone through so much of agitation already, she had not the strength to encounter more. So she left the morrow to take care of itself, and gave herself up unrestrainedly to the pleasure of her boy's society, and the charm of his light-heartedness and youth.

"Why should I make him sad before the time?" she asked herself; and she lay back in her chair, watching him, and listening to him, rejoicing to see him so gay. He was always full of life and spirits, but that day he had seemed even more joyful than usual. His father had been of a morbid, mopy disposition, but the boy inherited from his mother the happy quality of turning every little thing into enjoyment, and finding amusement everywhere. As he sat there, chatting and laughing, recounting little things that had happened at the Vicarage,

making itself heard. "Not to-night! not to-night! let him have one day more!"

The worst of it was, she had not only to announce the unwelcome news, but to prepare him for an almost immediate parting with herself. On that intermediate separation, that impending parting, she could not dwell herself for a moment without a tightening at her throat, and a strange thrill at her heart. How, then, could she expect it of him.

He was to spend the time of her absence at his uncle's; but as Colonel Middleton and his family would not be settled in the country till after her marriage, Mervyn must be left under the vicar's charge for at least a week or ten days, if the vicar would consent to the arrangement. But she did not yet consult him on the subject, for she did not like Mervyn to be the last to hear of what concerned him so much the most nearly.

All this made it very necessary that Mervyn should be soon told, and Magdalen later than she would not put off the announcement later than the following day. The gong sounded as she came

To his dismay he found it was guiltless of a parting, and with a sigh he resigned himself to the necessity of making one. This was always a great undertaking, and he tried and tried again to make a straight one, but to no purpose. No one could have accused him of not taking pains about it, for he dug the comb into his head with an energy for which he suffered all the evening. At last something like a successful result was obtained, and after gazing at it in the glass for some minutes with great admiration, he proceeded to put on his jacket, and to pull off his boots. Just at this moment the gong sounded. Thereupon ensued a tremendous hunt for his shoes, his flurry augmented by the consternation into which the unexpected sound had thrown him. He looked under the bed, he groped on all fours under the sofa, he made himself quite flat and forced himself under the wardrobe; he looked in all the most possible and all the most impossible places, and finally discovered they had been at his side all the time. He sprang to his feet when they were on, and made for the door. Full tilt he came right against the water-jug, which he

Threw Together. I.

nearing a row of boots and slippers, while another is making stealthy advances to the gown you have just thrown off, which has accidentally slipped from the bed, and a third is seen creeping out under the door, with the obvious intention of taking a turn in the passage. If, to add to your anxiety, the accident occurs in a friend's house, and you know that that friend is particular about his furniture, has lately carpeted his rooms, and perhaps occupies himself the room underneath, of which the ceiling has just been whitewashed, the situation is indeed terrible. I am not sure that in any case (speaking from the depths of a vast experience) instant flight is not the most satisfactory solution of the difficulty, leaving who may, or who will, to repair the mischief. At any rate, Mervyn came to that conclusion, after one hasty glance at the hurrying stream. And then he ran down the stairs, two steps at a time, and burst into the drawing-room, with a confused account of the circumstances which had detained him, in which soap-suds, and partings, shoes and water-jugs, were mixed in so vague a manner, that his mother would have been hopelessly bewildered, if

CHAPTER VII.

Breaking the News.

BEFORE he had time to wonder at his mother's unusual unpunctuality, she came into the room behind him; and in his eagerness to begin his story all over again, he lost sight of it. He followed her into the dining-room, talking all the way, and they sat down to dinner. The long meditation upstairs had left its traces on Magdalen Lyndsay's calm sweet face, and she was rather silent and thoughtful. But she strove to shake it off, and to enter into what her boy was saying.

Having finished his story about the water-jug, he branched off to another subject.

"Mother, you'll come and look at the cricket-match, of course."

"The cricket-match, dear; what cricket-match?"

"Why, the cricket-match, mother; the one I'm going to play in, you know—Married v. Single."

away from the crowd; and then I'll come and talk to you between my turns. You'll like to see me get a lot of runs, won't you? Promise to come!"

"I shall certainly come if . . ." She broke off suddenly. "If I am here," she was going to say, but she stopped just in time.

"When is the match?" she concluded. "To-morrow week is the Married v. Single, and a fortnight after Glen-Mervyn plays the village club.

I am in both, so you can take your choice. But I think you had better come to both. There is nothing to prevent it, you know," he added with a little laugh.

Nothing to prevent it! No! Nothing; except that by that time she would be Lord Wardlaw's wife, hundreds of miles away.

The thought smote upon her so sharply; it came so vividly before her that he would be playing his cricket-matches as usual, and that she would be far away. It brought the thought of parting so near, and the pain of it so clearly, that she hastily drank off a glass of water to hide the emotion she could not repress.

THROWN TOGETHER.

"Let us finish dinner quickly, darling," she said hurriedly, "and then we will go and sit in the garden. It is such a lovely night. In fact, I think I will leave you to finish alone, for I want to go out into the air." And she rose from her chair as she spoke. Mervyn looked rather surprised at the suddenness of the arrangement.

"Why, mother! you have had no strawberries and cream, and I was going to make you such a nice mess."

"I don't want any to-night, dear," she answered rather faintly, as she gained the door; but by irresistible impulse she returned to his side, and her arms round his neck.

"God bless you, my darling! my darling!" she whispered, as she kissed him.

"I shan't be long, mother, dear," he said, when returning her caresses; and before the door closed behind her, he was absorbed in his berry mess. He followed her in about ten minutes and found her sitting outside the window at twilight, on a low garden-chair. At her request he fetched her a white shawl, and after putting

fined to Glen-Mervyn and London. But he did not damp the outpourings of his feelings, pointing this out.

"It is quite right, darling, that you should leave your home, and I am glad you do. We have lived in it so many years now, you and I."

"So many years," repeated Mervyn, "ever since I was born, mother, haven't we—you and I?"

And he repeated the words "you and I" with a sense of fond proud appropriation, while he tightened his grasp on his mother's hand.

"And I should like to go on living here for ever, mother," he burst out again after a few minutes silence; "just you and I, only you and I."

And he repeated "you and I" in the same tone as before.

"You will talk differently in a few years, Mervyn," she answered, with a laugh which was half a sigh.

"Never, mother," he returned with all the positive confidence of youth, which, feeling itself so warm and faithful, cannot grasp the idea of change.

with some excitement, but checked herself each time.

"You and I for instance, mother; *we* do not change."

"And do you really think, Mervyn, that you are not changed, from the little tottering thing, with long hair and blue shoes, that used to patter about on this terrace, and ride on Beth-Gelert's back. I pity Beth-Gelert, if you take to such horsemanship now," she added, laughing.

Mervyn laughed too, though he was rather bored.

"I forgot," he said.

He knew by experience what it was for his mother's sense of humour to be tickled; and it hurt his dignity to see he had made himself ridiculous.

"I beg your pardon, dear," she said, still laughing; "but the idea of your not having changed since you were a baby amused me so. But I promise to be very grave now."

"Well, mother," he said eagerly, returning to his point, "it is only while one is growing that there are such great changes. Now *you*, at any rate, have

her eyes shone with a look which was half sad, half agitated.

Mervyn noticed it this time; he drew near and kissed her, whispering, "I forgot."
For he thought she was thinking of his dead father.

She returned his caresses fondly, but she did not speak; and he meanwhile, with his hand locked in hers, was going through a certain train of thought, which always came upon him when the subject of that father was—which it was very rarely—mentioned between them. He hardly dared confess even to himself how much he disliked his mother having a past with which he had nothing to do, and how much he inwardly rejoiced that she was all his own, and that there was no father to come in between them. Even to her he had never hinted at this, and she had no idea of it. It was a curious part of the boy's affection that his greatest pleasure in it was that sense of monopoly, that feeling of appropriation. It was the reflection that no one but himself had the right to her which made him so happy in her possession.

changes being possible as you do now. they came, Mervyn; yet they came! Then she added dreamily, "there *is* a land where cannot come; but it is not here, Mervyn here!"

"But, mother," urged the boy, "why do you so? You frighten me; for you talk as if a change *were* coming. Why do you?"

"Because, my darling, a change *is* coming, and I want to prepare you for it. I had not meant to speak of it to-night; but as our talk has taken this turn, the way seems paved for me to tell you of that which is coming into our lives, and which I humbly trust will bring happiness to us both."

"What is it, mother?" said Mervyn, in a very low voice.

"In the old days, dear, of which I have been speaking, I remember two old men, who had been friends from their earliest boyhood. The one was rich and unmarried; the other poor, a widower, with a grown-up daughter and a married son. They lived in London. The rich friend, out of his abundance, was always showering his gift on the poor

side for change of air, and they almost immediately left town. The young girl missed her companion sorely, and felt a little hurt that he had not come to wish her good-bye; when, on questioning her father, she found Charlie Digby had obtained an appointment for which he had been waiting, and was now on his way to Madrid. However, the sudden and dangerous illness of her father put all other thoughts out of her head. He died; and the girl found herself, a few weeks after leaving London, alone, penniless, and dependent on her married brother with his large family. Pitying, no doubt, her friendless condition, her father's friend asked her whether she could bear the disparity of years between them, and become his wife. She consented, and for eighteen months he made her a kind and indulgent husband. Then he died. Meanwhile years rolled on. By the successive deaths of his father and brothers, Charlie Digby succeeded to the family honours, and returned to England. He met once more the friend of his youth; the old intimacy was renewed; the old delight in each other's society revived, and he asked her to become

THROWN TOGETHER.

revived the old feelings in Magdalen's breast, the next words were spoken dreamily—more to herself than to the boy.

"By the recollection of the long, long years separation, he urged her not to refuse him; by loneliness and exile in a foreign land, he prayed her to make him happy now, and—she consented not broken. Mrs. Lyndsay paused again, but the silence was, with his head against her knees, and he never spoke nor moved.

Mrs. Lyndsay, knowing his impetuous, excited nature, marvelled to find him take the new quietly. She wondered what was passing in his mind, and longed to take one look at his face in the position in which he was sitting it was from her, and she felt it was better not to him, or to force him to speak too soon.

She knew some time must be allowed shock of a piece of utterly unexpected intelligence but she had not expected that Mervyn would be able to restrain for so long expression of his kind, accustomed as he was to pour forth

small and petty; and she had always the grand broad lines of Mervyn's character because simple, broad because so selfish.

And now she began to think that he was not going to disappoint her; that he was above all these little feelings; that the frank, generous nature she had always so delighted in was coming to his help now, and that he would stand the test. Nay, more; that there was nothing selfish in his fond, proud appropriation of herself, but that in his loving devotion there were depths which even she had not fathomed or suspected; and as she thought of it, her love and admiration deepened.

But she began to wish he would speak. This pent-up reserve was not natural to him, and at last she felt she *must* hear what his feelings were. So, laying her hand caressingly on his hair, she tried to turn his hidden face towards herself, saying in a fond, low tone, in which all her love and all her admiration seemed to express itself:

"Speak to me, my darling."

And then the burst came, with such passionate

thrown together.
them which was flashing from both of his. But
only for a moment. It faded away directly, and
gave place to a mournful, pitying light, which melted
the boy at once, and caused him to throw himself
at her knees, and exclaim in a less passionate, more
despairing tone,
"Oh mother, say you do not mean it; say it is
all a mistake."

"I cannot say so, Mervyn."
The low, sweet voice so dearly loved, thrilled
through the boy, and woke up his love with greater
force than ever; woke up, too, the feeling of blind
resentment, which her loving look had melted; and
he ground his teeth together in his effort to keep
back the torrent of words which rose to his lips,
but which, in spite of himself, escaped almost before
he was aware.

"You *shall* not do it! I won't have it! I hate
him!"
"Mervyn!"

Frightened into silence by the stern indignant
tone, so unlike what he was accustomed to hear

thought of it deprived him of voice where express one.

His mother saw how it was. "Never dear," she said with a sigh, "leave it for a sent; we will talk of it some other time. to say, of your part in it. Now we will mine."

This was her last resource; an appeal feelings for her sake; and it succeeded dire it made Mervyn feel as if he had been and he drew closer to her, and listened with might.

"Let me go back to what I was saying. your going to school. Well! I do not sh happy knack of putting that out of my h has been constantly present to me for many past, and the thought of how dull and lonel be without you has made me feel very sa it is only the beginning of the end, you kno the beginning of the end."

"How do you mean, mother?" asked th

"Ah, Mervyn, I am braver than you, fo faced the future and told myself that a r

yourself. And you must try and see that, t
would not have it otherwise, the pondering
things has made me feel that my life he
will not be so filled up and satisfying a
hitherto been. And so . . ."

She broke off with a smile, and her ey
dered away again to the silvery moon.

"And so? . . ." questioned Mervyn, "mo
mother?"

"So God, in His great love and g
Mervyn, has sent back to me the friend
youth, to bring a new interest into the life
going to be so lonely, and to be to me
panion and protector which you, my boy, c
a distance be. And you, Mervyn, if you
me is as real and unselfish as I have al
lieved it to be, far from regretting, shoul
that you do not leave me desolate and un
should be grateful to this friend who will g
cherish me in your absence, and keep
till you can return to me again. Wha
regret in it, Mervyn? Why should it make
Why! Mervyn was unable to find a

That night, kneeling before the throne (Magdalen Lyndsay poured forth her thank that at least *one* work of her life should not have been in vain, and that the love and care (should have received this palpable reward.

She had well nigh despaired several times during that long and stormy interview. Fear, duty, the habit of obedience and deference, will, the faith in her wisdom and judgment—none of these usually powerful agents had been anyway moved or swayed for a minute.

But love had been stronger than fear, stronger than habit, stronger than faith even. It touched the right chord at last, and shook once all jars in his heart. Nothing else would win him—nothing!

Her years of devotion had not been wasted after all. The foundation of her power sustained, being rooted in love. She did not know the future now as she had feared it once or during their long conversation. She felt that her boy had faced the struggle of their life.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Middleton Family move.

IN the course of a week after their wedding, their father, the little Middletons had it announced to them that their aunt Magda was going to be married to Lord Wardlaw in a fortnight, and that their cousin Mervyn was to stay with them at Granton during his absence abroad.

"Nina is certainly a most unsatisfactory girl," said Mrs. Middleton to her husband, when she turned to the drawing-room after making the announcement. "She showed no interest, and no surprise. One would almost have thought from her manner that she knew all about it before."

It is certainly wonderful how much in the practice of children to put "two and two together" of the scraps they hear, and so get at the truth. Their parents are, for the most part, as un-

holiday in the months of August, September, and October. She went to Paris to study part time, and for the sake of that prospective stage for her daughters Mrs. Middleton allowed longer leave of absence than is the usual. She felt she returned more and more glad after every holiday, to make her pupils French scholars. In the meantime they had a French lady to superintend the school-room, who had been Mrs. Middleton's own governess at a time. This lady, though in mortal terror of Mrs. Middleton, and a perfect slave to her rule, not, in herself, a very rigid disciplinarian; therefore Nina was glad that Mervyn's visit would be paid under her reign.

The children were to leave London in a week; and their parents were to remain before the wedding; but Mervyn was not to come. The whole family were settled at Granton. Their thoughts were very busy all that day mapping the future, and wondering if Mervyn would be happy. She was so abstracted during the afternoon, that Cecily could get nothing

by just holding up his
sant to see the pranc
nothing would stop
have the power, by
forcing the grand c
their haunches, whe

"How funny!"

bit about that. A
either."

"How do you
asked Nina.

"I asked him
he said he sho
first thought of
dilly, for all the
He said he ne
seeing them al

Nina did
was musing o
cousin's wish
own was a
She wonder
nicer feeling

The accident had the effect of producing a head official of great importance, who, while congratulating the lady on having escaped without injury, hastened to reassure her by pointing out that she would be certain to feel the effects more hereafter. He proceeded to observe, with solemn hilarity, that he looked upon the misadventure as a great compliment to the railway-carriage. It was not often that the windows were so clean enough to admit of such a mistake being made. He then bowed himself off, and the train proceeded on its way.

His remarks had left the lady in question in doubt as to the amount of disfigurement inflicted on her face; and she did not feel sufficiently intimate with any of her fellow-passengers (much the accident had drawn them together for a brief moments) to invite them to inspect her countenance. It seemed hard that she should be the only person to remain in ignorance of what concerned her so much the most nearly, but the fact remained, that she could not steal a glance at her own face, while all the others were at liberty.

Cecily's grammar, combined with her sudden interest in politics, put the finishing touch to the poor lady's distress of mind. She raised her eyes with an appealing glance towards the child, and then saw, for the first time, that the little girl was not speaking to her. Realising the mistake she had made, and fearful of having betrayed herself, and of attracting the notice she sought to avoid, she shrank back into her seat, and never looked up again during the whole of the journey.

On her own side, she could not but tell herself that it was a very serious step that she was taking; that she was going from a certain happiness—happiness that she had tried and proved—into the unknown.

On his, though she knew that eventually all would be for his own personal happiness, that the man who was to fill a father's place to him was all men the one he would love and honour more; yet she felt there would be much for him to be in the meanwhile.

It was not that future that she feared for so much as that nearer one of the long months without her spent in the colder atmosphere of cousins' home; the pain of the parting itself, which every hour brought nearer and nearer. The came upon them all too quickly.

"Mervyn," she said at breakfast, "your uncle to be here" at seven. I think I will walk with you as far as the gate at half-past six, and then return to meet him alone."

That was all that passed between them on the subject. All the day long she talked of his dog

Glad to see him smile, she went on. "Will you try and find out what Nina is like, and write and tell me, for I am curious to know?"

"Yes," he answered eagerly, and then he went on to speak of the other cousins, and to wonder if all the elder boys would be at home. And so they talked on quite cheerfully till half-past five, and then she said, "We must go."

They walked along, sometimes silent, sometimes conversing quietly, till they came to the gate. And there, among the wild Welsh mountains, in the glorious summer sunset, the mother and son parted;—God having left them long enough together to fit them for the work He would have them do; and now having other paths for them to walk in, wherein to serve Him.

"God bless you, my darling, my darling, and have you in His safe keeping for ever!"

She thought she could have controlled herself, but she felt her courage going, and her voice shook and faltered as she spoke.

So she determined to cut the parting short, much

parting a whit more painful to him. The quiver in her voice would betray her; she must not attempt to speak again. So she broke off suddenly; strained him to her, hiding her face on his shoulder; kissed his eyes, his lips, his hair; took his hands, and held them as if she could not let them go; gently disengaged herself from his clinging embrace, and stepped back into the wood, leaving him standing watching her disappear among its leafy paths, turning round once that he might see her bright and smiling, waving him on, and kissing her hand.

Smiling and bright to the last. Such was the picture he carried with him, as he turned away, feeling quite brave and cheerful, and confident that she felt the same. He vaulted over the gate, and took his way to the Vicarage.

Something rushed past him as he walked, turned, and bounded upon him. "Here, Beth-Gelert! here! Hallo, old fellow!" and Mervyn set off running, his thoughts diverted, child-like, by the sight of his favourite. And soon the echoes are ringing and laughing, as the dog and his young master betake themselves to their new abode.

departed: through the deserted gardens and the
silent drawing-room, up the still old staircase to her
own apartment, where she may give way to her grief
undisturbed. Yet, though not looking to the right
hand or to the left, she has been conscious of the
cricket-bat on the lawn, the butterfly-net on the
hall-table, the half-open door of the empty bed-
room, and the chill at her heart is greater than ever
when she reaches her chamber door.

Entering hastily, half-blinded by her tears, she
throws herself on her knees by the bed-side; and
there, at last, she is mastered by the grief that
has been fighting with her all day. For his sake she
kept it down, for his sake she has striven to be
that he might not be saddened by the remembrance
of her grief. But now that at his eye is no longer
her, the strain is over, and her slight figure is shaken
by the great sobs she cannot keep down.

"Oh my boy! my boy! How shall I live without
you!"

So must it ever be. "The parent's love for the
child," says a writer of the present century, "must
ever be greater than the child's love for the parent;

CHAPTER X.

The Vicar and his Maiden Sister.

IN the prim little parlour of the Vicarage was seated its prim mistress, the vicar's maiden sister.

She was knitting by the window, and her brother, the Rev. Pendarvis Hughes, was sitting in an arm-chair reading the paper.

It was evident that both were expecting someone; for the sister looked up at every sound, and even the brother roused himself once or twice from his reading.

"You have got everything nice for him in the bed-room, Gwen?"

"Yes, everything, *Pend*; quite a picture: a little bit of scented soap, clean curtains, a beautiful ornament in the fireplace, which I made myself, and I have moved the case of stuffed birds from the library in there. I thought it would amuse his poor little fellow. Don't you think so?"

But the vicar had some time since become en-

Poor thing! she was entirely devoid of talent. She had a wonderful aptitude for saying the thing. She loved and admired her brother, but was a little afraid of him. She looked upon him as a very superior being, and was quite aware of her own inferiority.

"He does not think much of women," she would tell her friends, mysteriously. But there was one woman in the world, in whom the rector believed implicitly, one in whom he saw no fault or flaw whatever; one, who in his eyes, possessed all womanly virtues without womanly weaknesses; and that was Magdalen Lyndsay.

Ever since she had been brought, years ago, to Glen-Mervyn to be the companion of a man many years her senior, he had esteemed and admired her. He was the only person in the world who had really known anything of her married life, and without asking any questions he had guessed at her early history. That is, he had always been convinced that his patron, Mr. Lyndsay, had been the object of her affections; and, realising this, he had admired more than he could say

preciated it even more after Mervyn had been his pupil for a few months. He found the boy so intelligent and so eager over his work, that it was a pleasure to teach him. It was quite a new interest in the vicar's life, and he soon began to look forward to the arrival of the boy as to one of the greatest pleasures in the day. The contact with the fresh enquiring mind made him young again, and he grew to love the bright face and sunny smile as if the boy had been his own son.

When Mrs. Lyndsay imparted to him her intended marriage, and her difficulties about Mervyn, he willingly undertook to house him for as long as his mother wished, and ever since he has been continually thinking what he could do to make him happy. He was a little nervous at the prospect of feeling deeply for the boy under his present circumstances, and knowing what a wrench that would be.

As he sat reading the paper that day he reverted to it over and over again, and then he every now and then let fall showed thoughts were full.

"Do you think he will bring many boxes?"

"I really cannot say."

"Will Mrs. Lyndsay bring him?"

"I should say probably not."

"Poor dear! think of her going to be a bride and having a nice young husband. Will it be a grand wedding, Pen?"

Very wearily he answered, "I do not know."

"When does she go up to London, Pen dear?"

"To-morrow."

"Colonel Middleton comes to fetch her, does he, Pen? I heard he was expected; isn't he? Pen dear, I hear Lord Wardlaw is in Ireland, and goes to London to meet her in a few days. Does he?"

"I believe so."

"Oh, Pen, dear! how I should like to go to wedding! Shouldn't you?"

Discouraged by his silence, she stopped; but burst out again in a moment.

"Pen, there is a carriage going along the high road, one of the Glen carriages. Oh, it is Col-

CHAPTER XI.

Gwen and her Victim.

SUCH was the family into which Mervyn's lot was to be cast till Colonel and Mrs. Middleton were ready to receive him at Granton.

It was *not* altogether a bad half-way house. The atmosphere into which he was to be translated at his uncle's was, as we know, such a very different one to that to which he was accustomed, that it was letting him down gradually not to plunge him into it at once. At the Vicarage, at any rate, he met with every care and attention that thoughtful consideration could devise. Gwen cared for all his creature comforts, and the vicar did all in his power to amuse and distract him, and make up to him for the loss of his mother's companionship. For the first few days Mervyn got on pretty well. It was quite natural to him to spend the greater part of his day there; he had done so for several

opportunity of a few minutes' private conversation with him. In the presence of her brother he dared not revert to such trivial subjects. Besides, whenever she alluded in the most distant manner to any of Mrs. Lyndsay's concerns, he had taken care to give her glances before which she quailed.

On the fourth day of Mervyn's stay, he received his first letter from his mother. It was written from Colonel Middleton's house in London, and announced her safe arrival there. It did not contain much beyond expressions of her longing to hear from him, and to know all that he was doing.

It was given to him at breakfast, and he was conscious of Gwen's eyes being fixed on him all greedily the whole time he was reading it.

The moment he had finished it, she said eagerly, "Well?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Mervyn, mistaking her question.

"Yes, but what news, dear? What does she say about Lord Wardlaw?"

days' events to tell her of! Three days! actually as long as that since he had seen or : to her. So he took a large sheet of paper began at the very top, feeling as if he should have room for all he had got to say. But he found writing a very different thing to talk. The turning of the sentences, the spelling of words, the time it took him, and the trouble it —all this rather cramped the free expression of feelings, and the vicar came in to say the postbox was going before he had written a page and half. He was obliged to let it go as it was, and the whole transaction left on him a vague sense of disappointment. He had not thought it would have been so difficult to write to his mother. He had not said half he meant to say. He had not answered half her questions. He did not feel as if he had been talking to her at all. It depressed him, and made him sad all day. He could not shake off the feeling. He half thought of writing another letter, so as to send a good long one the next day; but as soon as his lessons were over, there came cricket, and then supper, and then

she was going to cross the same day and to travel on to Vienna, via Amiens and Paris.

She told him that if he answered her letter the day he received it, she would find it waiting for her. The letter ended by saying Colonel Middleton would write to the vicar as soon as he and Mr. Middleton were settled at Granton. Mervyn looked very grave after reading this letter, and ate his breakfast in silence.

"Mr. Hughes," he said after a time, "will you give me some foreign paper?"

"Yes, my boy. Why?"

"Mother wants to find a letter waiting from me in Paris," he said, with an evident effort, "and she says I must write it to-day."

"Why, good gracious!" exclaimed Gwen, "to-day is the wedding-day!"

Before any answer could be made, the maid-servant came in to say a poor boy had called and begged the vicar to go without delay to his father, who was dying and wished to see him. Mr. Hughes rose directly.

"It is many miles away, Mervyn," he said,

"Penny stamps would do," said Mervyn, "if I knew how many to put on."

"Now was there ever such a piece of luck!" exclaimed Gwen. "Your dear mother gave me a little gilt weighing-machine as a parting gift. She little thought the first use I should put it to would be to weigh your letter to her on her wedding-day!"

Mervyn winced. "Where is it?" he said. "On the writing-table?"

"Dear me, no!" said Gwen; "do you think I would let such a gift as that lie about on the tables to get dusty? No, it is nicely wrapped up in its box, just as she gave it to me, upstairs in my drawer. Give me the letter, dear, and I'll go up and weigh it."

Mervyn handed her the letter, and she got up from her chair. When she got to the door, she glanced at the direction, and then looked at Mervyn, with a twinkle in her eye. He felt irritated, without knowing why.

"What is the matter?" he said.

get the weighing-machine. What a joke, isn't it? And with a little chuckle of delight, Gwen tripped out of the room.

Surely next to being devoid of feeling, there is nothing worse than being devoid of tact. And as much pain can be inflicted by the want of one as by the want of the other. No refinement or cruelty could have done more than those few words of the unconscious Gwen's. The boy's feelings had been strung to the highest pitch; the embers that were smouldering in his heart needed only a very little gust of wind to fan them into a flame. He stood literally quivering under her speech, and when the door closed he gasped with the effort he made to control himself. For he felt there must be no display, no betrayal of himself. Gwen would be back again in a minute, and to save himself from her, to hope to escape from the still greater trial of her sympathy and condolences, he *must at least* appear unmoved.

It was a new lesson the poor child was learning—he who had never had occasion to hide his feelings before. But the contact with new characters

done with him yet. She had at last got her victim into her clutches, and she was going to make the most of her opportunity. Question upon question, surmise upon surmise, she showered upon the boy; all, in fact, that the vicar had so strenuously endeavoured to guard him from, now fell upon him.

But there are limits to human endurance, and Mervyn at length felt he could bear no more. Faltering some excuse about getting the stamps, he hastily snatched up his letter, and made for the door. Nor did he take any notice of the shrill little remonstrances that reached him as he left the room. His courage was all gone, his self-control had deserted him.

He hastily entered the little study, and locking the door after him, tore the letter up into shreds, flung them* furiously into the fireplace, and then buried his head in his hands, and cried as if his heart would break.

"By the time it gets to Paris no one will know who Mrs. Lyndsay is, for there will be such person in the world!"

"No such person in the world!" No Magdalen Lyndsay! In fact, no mother! She was his no longer! Seas rolled between them. She shared no longer his home or his name. She was gone for ever: she was as good as dead! She might as well be lying in the little churchyard at Glen-Mervyn. Better! oh, far better! For then she would at least be near him, still belong to him; still bear upon her tombstone the old familiar name!

With eyes blinded by their tears, he drew from his pocket her letter received that morning, that he might gaze upon the name once more. But it was not there.

"Now and always, my darling," the letter ended, "your own loving Mother." And his feelings underwent a change. "Now and always," he sobbed; "now and always."

Oh yes! she was his mother still; his own, and no one else's. He read the letter through. He drank in the living love which breathed through every line of it, and the thought of the marble tombstone fled away. Under any name, and in

it! Why, dear me! dear me! the postboy has been gone nearly three-quarters of an hour!"

Five minutes more saw Mervyn rushing wildly towards the stables, and Gwen trotting as quick as she could after him, talking all the way. Her shrill little remonstrances and shriller assurances that it was no use trying to overtake the postboy fell on ears wilfully deaf and heedless.

The boy's mind was filled by only one thought. The letter *must* go. Somehow or other it must be managed. Arrived at the stable he began to saddle his pony himself; and had nearly finished before the panting Gwen came up to him.

"It's . . . no . . . use . . . dear . . . I'm . . . sure," she said, in little gasps; "he . . . must be nearly . . . there . . . by now."

"He goes by the high road," answered Mervyn, his mind intent on the straps and buckles. "If I go across country, I must get up to him."

Gwen reiterated her assurances that it would be of no avail, and that he would be sure just to miss the boy on the road.

"Look here!" said Mervyn, who has missed the post. How can I. It is a letter to mother, you see, know *what* I shall do if it do. servants worshipped Mervyn and were ready to work to the boy. man entered at once into the case, and saw no difficulties and did not leave the town for half postboy's arrival, as *the* letters had good horse would do it in. There was just time to saddle. Nothing could be easier.

"On then; do it at once," said mother's horse; he is by far the off as soon as you can!" No done. In a few minutes Mervyn's vision of seeing the man depart, letter in the pocket of his saddle, long sigh of relief. "She will go out loud. "She won't have to go Paris, and find none. Oh how the tears came into his eyes.

loathsome, detestable! He wished out of its very neighbourhood; hind, and to get away from the such dreariness and desolation. stables, mounted his pony, and the Vicarage. Change of tho happily, for the vicar had returned had expected, and the afternoon But the recollection of that deserv weighed upon his spirits, and he go to Granton.

He painted to himself the de house so full of young people; the big school-room party, the so and his aunt. The little Vicar drawing-room and its uneventful youth and spirits about the vicar began to weary and depress him, was great when at last the summon

The vicar was going to London they would travel thus far together, vyn would go on alone. The thought were delightful.

CHAPTER

Mervyn's Arrival at

It was about half-past six up to the door of Granton eager excitement, half expectation and cousins assembled in the no one there, and he was using an empty drawing-room and very much inclined to run out and call out all the names he could. His intention was frustrated by his aunt.

"Ah, Mervyn, here you are! I hope you are quite well."

Mervyn ran joyfully up to her warmly. "I'm so glad to see you."

She then asked him a few questions about his journey, &c., what lesson-books he was using, and how far advanced he was in his studies of learning.

many stairs and along many distant school-room. "So you and Cecily. They have got their governess at present. course? I am sorry to say English too much, and the to do the same. I hope you example."

So saying, she turned and voices were at last heard; door, she entered, and she brought my nephew. Mervyn

Sitting at tea at a round and Edmund, and a very looked up when Mervyn entered of pleasure; and Cecily jumped run to meet him, but seemed glanced timidly at her mother.

Mervyn ran up to Madeline and then kissed his cousins. "is a long time since I have said. "Nina has grown very she? and Edmund looks to me

"Oh, sit by me," said litt

"No, by me, please," said

Mervyn good-naturedly p
them; after which the child
another, and no one spoke.
customed to the society of ch
know what to say.

Besides, he was very bu
looked for some time at N
likeness of which his mother
had been ruffled by her motl
pression of her face only
opinion of wherein the differ

His thoughts wandered o
face, though his eye still rest

"How you stare!" said sl
you look at me?"

"Oh, I wasn't thinking ab
a child's candour.

"What were you thinkin
Cecily.

"Mother," he answered:
tears came into his eyes. N

He felt more than repaid for a him, as he read and re-read. He could not go back to the. He wanted to think it over, self. So he undressed and go

He woke the next morning pleased at the idea of being declined to be quite happy. school-room party; it seemed to him; and he was so merry made them all laugh. He went at once by his attentions to her addressing his remarks to her his cousins did not include her as much as they might.

As soon as breakfast was going out.

"Out!" said Cecily, with could. We've got to do lessons

"What shall you do, Merv afraid you'll be rather dull."

"What does Aunt Lydia he asked.

"Oh, if she's busy," he answered by myself, but I must just run. Good-bye for the present. I'll think you've done your lessons." whistling.

Nina looked very thoughtful after. She could not bear the thought of being rebuffed, particularly on his first. And yet she feared much that his would not but be very different to that which she had expected, and to what he had been saying.

She waited some time, listening for the sound of his returning, but it did not come. She was relieved, feeling that he must have found his way out, or else he would have been in the school-room. She drew her little window, and began to write a note; but the least sound in the garden made her jump up and look out, for she was wondering what he could be about.

Meanwhile, Mervyn, not finding the garden, pursued his investigation in the

callous to his good looks and plea of countenance. The room, which be rather dull and silent just now, brightened by his presence; and she herself not only listening, but join conversation, to the neglect of her business so sure that she would be glad took it so much as a matter of course to be there, that she began to look a little lighter herself.

"Ain't you rather dull, Aunt Lydia?"
Mrs. Middleton, on having returned home to her, owned that she was

"I suppose you are always dull. Nina and Cecily are at their lessons to be while I was at the Vicarage to leave her then, you know. I was being alone if she had plenty to do. I really had that. But still she spends hours sometimes for my lessons me to come home. I dare say I spend hours for Nina and Cecily's company. don't you, aunt Lydia?"

"Aunt Lydia, I've brought a beauty? Look!"

Mrs. Middleton looked whether she admired most the rose he was holding out, or above it, smiling down upon very graciously.

"Do you know, Aunt Lydia to come out for a little run. delicious it is. We might gether."

Mrs. Middleton looked round and then at the sunny garden.
"I've half a mind to come dull after London, and I've do."

"Oh yes, do," said Mervy fetch your things, if you like. Before she could answer, ten minutes returned with all his arm in a heap.

"I've been rather long," said them down on the nearest

till she took that walk with her young man. It was all she could do to satisfy his inquiries. His boy's knowledge and accuracy surprised her. Every moment she feared exposing her ignorance. His interest in the subject, and acquaintance with matters of detail, seemed to her quite extraordinary. And instead of giving instruction, she found herself receiving it.

He had suggestions to make here and there, and recommendations to be made there, and all his remarks were sensible and to the purpose. He seemed to know the name and history of every flower that blossomed, and of every shrub and tree that grew. It was just the same when they came to the mill. He inspected the machinery; and he entered into conversation with the man who showed it to him, with the ease of one who quite knew what he was talking about.

Mervyn presently asked to see a certain fascinating machine lately invented, which he seemed to take as a matter of course should be there. The man shook his head.

"We have not got one, *sir*."

this. She was thinking of her ' now nearly sixteen, thought of and amusement, and had never thing connected with the man. She felt quite certain he had the knowledge possessed by She began to wonder whos nesses? Tutors? Whose? course. An easy-going, thing in him. Evidently kind of boy.

"I wonder why my Boys asked herself.

And yet something in M grated rather uncomfortable on

"Mother says she those sort of things," always to

"I'm sure no boy of mine cared to hear about such thing within her.

"Qui s'excuse, s'accuse," sai

"I can't remember," said the

Nina from the school-room window with the greatest astonishment. First, at seeing her mother go for a walk with Mervyn, and to her surprise as they went along, as if on the most friendly terms; then at the length of time that elapsed before their voices returned to the window again; and last, at seeing Mervyn climb the tree, and Mrs. Middleton, laughing and so completely at his ease with her. Her mother, however, her mother anxiously, fearing Mervyn was so far, and that he would receive a shock, she hardly believe her eyes when she saw her mother nod and smile to the top of the tree. To go in-doors without so much as a word from her mother.

The little daughter at the school-room window began to puzzle out the very problem. What was working out in the drawing-room? What was it? Why was this boy so much at home? What fault was it that others were not so much at home?

Curiously enough, they both came to the same conclusion. It was Mervyn himself. He was so charming, and of such an engaging

this operation took him a good he had intended; it proved so ve

When he returned to the scho lessons over, and his cousins g half-hour's air and exercise in pursued Madame into her room, radish. He found her busy was and, his hand being in, he instaj join her in so interesting an o done with an amount of energy t brushes were wholly unaccustom farther won the old lady's heart about the room, and asking a questions as to the history of eac photograph adorned Madame's w their circumstances, their habits a enquired into with an interest wl and made her quite loquacious.

The luncheon-bell rang, an ready for luncheon.

"Please go and get ready, M adding shyly, "We are very p mamma comes in directly the bel

to have so many to be with must find it so difficult to see day. Mother has only got me have got Nina and Cecily, and and Baby. Oh! and Willie, and Bert, when they are at home. rather difficult?"

Mrs. Middleton, in the past answered that a large family was convenient in more ways than one

"What are we going to do about us?" asked Mervyn presently.

"What would you like to do, Middleton."

"Ride, I think," he answered you know. Will you ride with

Nina, with her eyes fixed upon him murmured something unintelligible.

The difference between her and him struck Mrs. Middleton forcibly provoked with her.

"Why cannot you answer me more sharply, "instead of looking as

The boy's gratitude and relief thanked her warmly.

"But what will you do, Aunt, be all alone. Shan't you be dull

"I am going to drive to the answered, "to meet some people who

"Then I suppose I *shan't* see you come back," he said, as they sat at table; "so good-bye till then." He kissed her, and gave her a kiss.

Mrs. Middleton said nothing so odd as she returned it. Whether she was surprised or pleased, it was impossible to say. She returned to the drawing-room and sat on the sofa;—and thought.

Mervyn came down ten minutes earlier on his ride, and found the ponies waiting at the door, and Nina in her riding habit.

"Is he coming too?" she asked the coachman.

Nina nodded. Mervyn looked at her.

"You must lead the way," he said, and started, "because you will know the way."

"So it is. But it is better
Madame and Cecily."

"Mother and I have such a
the boy after a pause. "We ^{lay}
way along, and . . . oh, ^{moth}
half involuntarily, as the ^{reco}
him, and he turned his head ^{awa}
that rushed to his eyes.

Nina looked pityingly at ^{his}
longed to say something to ^{comfor}

Her feelings must have ^b
eyes; for when Mervyn met the ^{le}
"You *are* like mother, I dec ^{le}
were, and I said . . . Oh! I
you what I said."

"Oh yes, do!" said Nina.

"You would not like it, you ^k

"I assure you I should not ^{mi}

She was pleased and interes
she turned to Mervyn was a very

"What a pity it is you ^e
like that! . . . and then I ^s
said it!"

"Oh, that was all!" he answered
a gallop."

It was ten minutes or so before
they were walking again; and then Mervyn
is a pity, isn't it?"

"What is a pity?"

"Why, that you always look
so tired."

"I don't!" flashed out Nina.

"Oh, but you do, Nina. I
know, because you don't see your
face to say that you always do, but
now at luncheon to-day, oh dear,
you looked!"

"You don't understand," said
Nina lessly in her saddle. "I wasn't
wasn't quite that."

"What then?" asked Mervyn.

Nina hesitated. She looked
at her face, and felt she would never
stand what reserve meant, nor
the complications of pride and
vanity.

"It is no use, Mervyn; you
won't stand."

"It seems to me such a trouble for so much what people say."

"It's not so much what they as what they might *think*."

"Think what?"

"Oh, all sorts of things."

"What *does* it matter what people

Nina had no answer to make idea, and the cousins rode on in

"Who do you love most in the world?" was Mervyn's next speech.

Nina was not at all prepared for

"Who do you?" she said hastily

"Mother, of course," he answered. "Should I love best? I only asked you to have a father too, and I thought you my favourite between them."

Perhaps at any other time Nina would have had more discrimination; but, being in a corner by her fear of Mervyn's question, she spoke without reflection.

"You have got a father too, haven't you?"

"Lord Wardlaw is your father."

"Mrs. Middleton will be in sir, I think," the servant added.

Up to her dressing-room v steps at a time, and knocked at

"Come in," said his aunt's

"I've come to have a little advancing into the room, an the end of the sofa, on which lying. "Are you tired, Aunt you some tea?"

Mrs. Middleton was surpris still more so at the boldness trated into her sanctum; but him away.

"I have had some tea, th

"You don't look very co Your head is so low. V pillow?"

Mrs. Middleton confess vantage, and was surprise which the boy arranged it

"Your tutor is coming said; "so you will have pl

"So you are taking care of you? That's right. What's Headache?"

"No," she answered; "I won't my drive. The O'Briens have and Mr. West. You had better see them."

"Shall I stay with you, or Mervyn."

Mrs. Middleton did not take either course, and was about to go to the school-room, when C answered for her.

"Yes, come along with your old friend of your mother's went."

Mervyn wearied of Sir J a time, and began to wonder what were about. He thought that their father had arrived, or run down to see him. So he went to the school-room with the news.

"Uncle Rowley's come."

"No," said Mervyn; "it was only I found her in the drawing-room, so I went in and found her."

"But what did you want her for?" said Cecily.

"Oh, I don't know; nothing but I wanted only to have a talk with her."

Cecily looked very surprised.

"A talk with her; how very odd it seems to have a talk with mamma! I couldn't talk about? I'm sure I shouldn't say."

"I suppose that's because you're a girl," said Mervyn, rather puzzled. "and I, when I'm at home, sometimes sit in the whole afternoon. I dare say you're older. Nina would find plenty to say to Aunt Lydia about, I dare say; wouldn't she?"

Now Nina, though pretending to be listening intently to this conversation, was very glad that it was Cecily, and not

"I know a capital thing that mother," he went on, unheeding the kerchief dipped in eau-de-cologne laid on the forehead. Mother's get cured by that. Did you ever

"No," said Nina, in a low voice

"What do you do, then?"

"Nothing," said Nina, her truth itself over her feelings of shame.

"I'm afraid you're not a good nurse," Mervyn, looking fixedly at her.

Nina tried in vain to get away searching eye.

"It's not my fault," she said, half

She quite longed to explain to Mervyn all was, and yet she felt it would be best to find it out his own way.

"You don't understand," she said, and

Mervyn was seized with remorse at her unhappy, and, embracing her warmly, he tried to talk of something else.

"What do you generally do at the moment?" Mervyn said; "let us have some fun!"

O'Brien. "I'm expecting her to minute."

Just then a bell rang.

"There it is. I must take her

And Wilson carried the baby off alone with Totty. The little fellow seeing a stranger, seemed terrified.

"Don't be frightened, Totty," said he, "I'll take care of you."

But the child was unused to strangers, and he shrank back.

"Where's Nurse? I want her,"

"She's coming back," said Mervyn, "I'll cry, Totty."

But Totty could not stand it. He was shy and nervous. Large tears gathered in his mournful eyes.

Mervyn was much distressed, and did not know what to do.

"Oh, don't cry, little man," he said, "I'm here!"

And he executed a somersault

But Totty didn't move, and Mervyn appointed.

"Why won't he come, Nina?"

"He can't," said Nina, in a low voice.

"Can't!" echoed Mervyn; "do you can't walk yet?"

Nina shook her head.

"Why, when I saw him in London, he would run very soon."

"I thought so then, but"

"Why, Nina, is he so delicate as all that, never going to be strong, like other boys?"

Nina couldn't trust herself to speak.

"Poor little fellow," said Mervyn, in a low voice.

"You needn't pity him," said Nina, "he's as usual as usual, but he's haunted as usual by the fear that Totty considered a black sheep; "he's very haughty."

As if in confirmation of her assertion, Totty looked up with a smile and said, "look at my pictures."

"He likes you, Mervyn," exclaimed Nina, surprised out of her reserve; "he doesn't like to new people."

opened, and Mrs. Middleton, c
appeared upon the scene, close
husband. She stopped short in l

The school-room table was l
the window, and the chairs wer
Mervyn, with Edmund on his
wildly round the room, jumping c
books and maps, that were placed
purpose) at measured intervals; in
Cecily, who was darting about w
rapidity; while Nina blew a horn, a
his hands from his corner.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed
"what is the meaning of this uproa

"We're hunting," answered M
and breathless; "and we're having
Cecily's the fox. Tally ho! Yonder
do you stop, Cecily! And Nina! go
horn."

So saying, Mervyn, who was the
did not seem discomposed at Mrs. M
trance, bounded over a big heap c
catching his foot in a loose one at

n, dressed for dinner,
closely followed by her
in her astonishment.
was pushed up against
were heaped upon it.
his back, was racing
ing over little heaps of
placed (evidently for the
ls; in full pursuit after
out with inconceivable
morn, and Totty clapped

imed Mrs. Middleton.
uproar?"

red Mervyn, laughing
having a capital run.
Yonder he goes! Why
ina! go on blowing the

was the only one who
at Mrs. Middleton's en-
heap of books, and
one at the top, met

sured his length on the ground, rolling over Edmund
as he fell.

"Bravo!" exclaimed his uncle, laughing, "you
took that fence well!"

"This will never do," said Mrs. Middleton.
"Mervyn, you must remember your cousins are
young ladies, and you must not teach them these
rough games."

"Oh! nonsense, Lydia!" said Colonel Middleton,
"what does it matter! It will do them all the good
in the world. They're much too prim and old-
fashioned. I never saw Nina look so animated, and
look what a colour Cecily has got. Little Totty,
too! See how he enjoys it!"

"Totty!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton, "how did
Totty get here?"

"I brought him down, Aunt Lydia," said Mervyn,
"running up; he was so dull all alone in the nursery,
and wanted to come."

Happily for all parties, the dinner-bell rang at
that moment, and Mrs. Middleton hurried away.
Colonel Middleton remained behind a moment to
wish them all good-night, and Mervyn and Cecily

eagerly asked for leave to go on. Colonel Middleton ran off laughing; he would not be responsible; but he found his laugh had been taken from him. When he ran downstairs he heard the up with greater force than ever; and his voice reached him as he crossed the hall. "ho! Yonder he goes!"

And so ended Mervyn's first day.

END OF VOL. I.

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GETHER.

go on with their game.
laughing, declaring he
out he was not sorry to
en for assent, when as
the uproar recommence
; and Mervyn's ringing
ossed the hall: "Tally

irst day at Granton.

L. I.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



THROWN TOGETHER

A STORY

BY

FLORENCE MONTGOMERY,

AUTHOR OF "MISUNDERSTOOD."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1872.

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THROWN TOGETHER.

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Middleton's Headache.

THE order of the next day was rather changed. Mervyn's tutor arrived at nine, and from that hour till nearly luncheon-time he was closeted with him in a little room looking out into the kitchen-garden.

There was comfort to come, however. His uncle informed him at luncheon that Mr. West was a cricketer, and that there was going to be a game in the field outside that afternoon, which Mervyn was welcome to join.

This was great news for the boy; and he ran up to his room directly, to put on his cricketing things and get his bat. He looked into the school-room on his way down, and found his cousins dressed for walking.

"Ain't you coming to watch
said.

"No," said Cecily; "we're going
walk on the high road. Isn't it a

"Oh, what a pity! Shall I as
let you come and watch us, instead

"Oh, you can't go to mamma;
"she's shut up in her room, ill."

"Ill!" exclaimed Mervyn; "wasn't
wasn't at luncheon? I was wondering
was. What is the matter?"

"I don't know," said Cecily.

"Not know! Nina, don't you know?"

"She has got a very bad headache,"
said Nina.

"Has she?" he exclaimed; "have
Nina?"

"No."

"Ain't you going to her?"

"No."

Mervyn looked curiously at Nina;
beginning to understand her a little;
press the question, but remained sta

middle of the room, swinging his bat round and round, and evidently turning something over in his mind.

"How nice you look in your white flannel and blue cap," said Cecily, admiringly.

"Do I?" he said, absently. "I know what I'll do," he finished, suddenly. "I'll try my bandage dipped in eau-de-cologne and water; I am sure it will do her good." And he ran out of the room, leaving his bat behind him.

Nina had an instinctive feeling that a struggle had been going on in her cousin's mind, and that it had been hard for him to give up his favourite game for his aunt's sake. She was filled with admiration for him, though she felt fearful as to how his sacrifice would be received.

Mrs. Middleton was prostrate with a headache on the sofa, and had given orders that no one should disturb her; when, to her surprise, without knock or warning of any kind, her dressing-room door slowly opened, and somebody came in.

"Who is there? who is there?" she exclaimed; "you can't come in."

"Oh, it is only me," said a clear young voice;

and the tone was so confident of one who merely meant to and was sure of a welcome. He said nothing more, and on who her visitor might be. Then saw Mervyn, with a bottle on hand and a half-filled tumbler, advancing quietly towards her.

"*You, Mervyn! No, no. I am here now. I have got a very*

"Oh, I won't let any of that assure you," said Mervyn, as he put the bottle on a little table. "I want we shall be as quiet as possible."

"But what do you want?" she said.

"Well, only a pocket-handkerchief," he answered. "I got the water and the soap from Uncle Rowley's dressing-room. The pocket-handkerchiefs did not do; they were too small. Where do you keep yours? In the top drawer. Please don't move. Here they are, like mother's. I shall wash my face. Is your head very bad?"

Taken by surprise, Mrs. Middleton answered "Dreadful!" and, indeed, it was so bad just at that moment, that she felt incapable of asking the boy any questions, or of making any further efforts to get rid of him.

She lay there, forgetful of his presence, till she was reminded of it by feeling a cold damp something laid gently across her throbbing temples. It felt like ice against her burning head, and, closing her eyes with a sense of keen pleasure in the sensation, she involuntarily exclaimed, "How delicious!"

"I thought you'd like it," said the boy, triumphantly; "and as soon as this gets the least warm, I have got another ready. It is soaking in the glass now. You need not tell me when you are ready for it, because it will hurt you to talk. If you just move your hand, I shall understand."

Too glad to avail herself of the permission, Mrs. Middleton lay still for some time, and then gave the required signal. Mervyn was watching for it, and instantly removed the handkerchief; but, before putting on a fresh one, he dabbed her forehead with the mixture, and then blew softly on it. The effect

was so charming, that Mrs. Middleton dreading every moment that he But he seemed to know exactly how and at the right moment he stopped the cold bandage again.

By degrees Mrs. Middleton's pain began to lessen, and a delicious sleep came over her. The glare of the light, which, when she first lay down, though her eyes were closed, gave her a pleasant, that she began to feel there was a monotonous droning sound for which she could not account, so soothing and pleasant.

She was gradually dozing off, unconscious that at intervals the bandage was changed, as soon as it grew to be of use.

At last she remembered nothing. She woke some time after, free from pain by her nap. Opening her eyes, she found the room was carefully darkened, and she was sitting at the window, reading

"Oh, *I* darkened the room," I knew you would never get to sleep in the light."

"It was very kind of you," she said, with more warmth than she usually expressed, "very kind and thoughtful. You must have done it very cleverly. I never let me not to have heard it. But I am sure you are a good boy, you must have been very diligent in the dark. I hope you had an am-

"Well, not very," he answered, "it does not matter. It was the only one I thought would amuse you. It was as if you had been reading it; your place."

"But I don't quite understand
ton; "you were not reading it to
By the way, I did hear a droning
as I went off. Could that have
out loud?"

Mervyn went off into fits o

"Is *this* what you have been reading?
aunt, laughing.

"Yes," he answered.
'distressing,' to 'Hydropho
got to that I left off, for
sleep."

"But were you not longing to play
the time?"

The answer was painted on the boy's o
but he only said, "Oh, as long as I was
was too busy to think of it."

"But when you left off?" persisted Mrs. Mi

"Well, yes—rather," he replied.

"Then why did you not go? I ma
done all you could for me, an

"Well, you see, Aunt Lydia
creaky boots on, and I was af
I walked across the room."

Mrs. Middleton looked at h
if he had been some natural
said, "Well, I won't detain you
Run out and have your game.
wondering what has become of

become, even if it were not ne-
customed to sit a great deal in
otherwise amusing himself, in a s
could not really be fond of cri
never have been able to give
readily, and amuse himself in
As she thought over it, she went
pull up the blind. The first thing
was Mervyn's graceful figure in
relieved by his blue cap. He
after the ball which had just
furthest end of the field, and
hurled it with a tremendous s
wicket with so true an aim that
the air.

"Well done!" shouted his i
should never get that fellow ou

The next batter sent the ba
the garden; and Mrs. Middlete
mire the agility with which
haha; and swung himself on t
hardly got back to his place
came some way above his hea

of Nina attempting to come near or even inquiring how I was after

How different this boy was! I sought her out since his arrival. seemed to be in her society. Nir selfish, so indifferent; Cecily, so the boys entirely taken up with their own amusements. Magdalen was lucky in her boy.

"There must be something children's dispositions," she said. "A screw loose somewhere. I wish them so cold and selfish?"

So I lay and pondered this work of my own hand had put from her driven away the attentions that I receive and encourage. She had her own fault, the watchful care and the proud protecting affection. The tender solicitude, the thought which other women meet with of their children, had never selfishness she had never done

THROWN TOGETHER

defiant expression which she often
her shyness. The fact was, she v
see her, and rather taken aback;
Mervyn's conduct, she had been fo
trying to show her mother a little a
All the way along she had been
mind that she would go to her room
and ask how she was, and wheth
anything for her.

She could not help feeling it wa
Mervyn's example, and show a little
the proceeding was so novel, that :
if she should be able to manage it.
so odd, she had told herself; her r
so surprised. Perhaps she might me
and at the very thought her pride h

How often she had rehearsed he
the walk, in her own mind; how of
settled upon, and then rejected, d
carrying it out, would be incredible
as she. Supposing she knocked a
softly, and there was no answer.

and she had soothed her conscience pricked at the sight of Mervyn's confession; herself she was not to blame; it was his fault, though whose she could not say. But it wouldn't do. Conscience had *not* done all she might in favour of going to her mother's room; and she suddenly thought of gathering some wild flowers. Then if her mother said "Who's there? What do you want?" she said "You can't come in;" then if she said "It is me, and I've brought you some flowers," she said "Also she might add quickly, "I'll show them if you don't want them." Then she would pick them, and then see her mother.

Accordingly, she had gathered some flowers, and was beginning to feel quite brave and self-assertive; when, as we have seen, even this was overthrown by meeting her mother in the hall. She was quite well again. The revulsion was so abrupt that Nina quite started; she was so shy and guilty, and almost as if she could not guess what was passing in her mother's mind.

There was no mistaking which quiry from real interest, and was forced herself to make it.

Mrs. Middleton addressed her nephew.

"Thank you, my dear boy, well again. I don't want to force you," she concluded, coldly; "if you pray do not oblige yourself to you *do* feel it, you certainly are in a manner of showing it. I wish you to be as thoughtful and unselfish as possible, so that there would be no need to pry into your affairs of yourself. Your enquiries would be but as it is, I believe you talk too much and nothing."

Nina could not stand it; she ran into the house.

was full of company, they were very self-sent for.

The first time after Mervyn's arrival the message came up that they would not be received. His astonishment was very great, and he could not believe he and his cousins would not really see their uncle and aunt again that evening, not even to bid them good-night. He was bustling off to his dressing-room, to see if he could find her there. Nina advised him not.

"You won't find her, Mervyn."

"Why not? I did the first day."

"That was quite a chance. When the house is full she always stays with the bell-rings."

"Bother the company! I wonder if they will, Nina?"

"If these went, others would. From the first house is always full."

"But, Nina! how can you be kissing Aunt Lydia and wishing

his mother, felt the want of a person to speak to. Puzzled by him, he longed for some one or at least to help him to im-

Had he had many opponents, his aunt, it would all have been naturally as possible; but he was alone in his room and its life, and he was at rest. He saw his aunt at luncheon during the ten minutes before never. He made several attempts, but she was always surrounded by one or two unsuccessful pilgrims. In his room, he had given it up.

And the effect it all had on him pressed him greatly. Sometimes the school-room life weighed upon him, the want of sympathy between the school-room chilled him, the cold, loveless home; and as he sought the warmth and love of the street, he had been accustomed, the loneliness

she leant her head upon her hands, and gazed at him as he sat huddled up by the window with face hidden: a whole world of pity in her eyes. Suddenly Mervyn looked up, and they met.

Something in their expression must have told him all that the poor stiff little tongue could say; for the boy rose up, and came and threw himself on the floor by her side.

"Kiss me, Nina," the poor forlorn child claimed; "nobody ever kisses me now; nobody since the evening mother went away."

And Nina, moved with pity, put her arms round him, and kissed him again and again.

"She'll soon come back," he whispered.

"Say it again," she whispered closer to her.

And Nina said it over and over.

From that time they understood each other; and Mervyn, secure of sympathy, He understood that, cold and lonely as she looked, she was not really so;

miration for it. She marv^{Med}
 her all the same. Under^{onst}
 self, Mervyn's caressing ways
 She began rather to like being
 would not for the world have
 Mervyn's affectionate farewell.
 time, she maintained her res
 leaving the talking to him.
 generally, in their long so-call
 was his curious store of thoug
 came tumbling out as they rode
 was always intelligent and intere
 volunteered an idea of her own

She learnt a good deal from
 from his constant intercourse w
 so much better stored than Nin
 a great deal in that way, whi
 have picked up otherwise. So
 repeat things his mother had s
 opinions on various subjects. H
 discursive, but always attractive
 gion came in in its turn, whic
 shy. It was a subject on which

and a desire to conceal, and her ban.

The little prevarications came to her. Her mother's civilities she did not care for, the little savouring of falsehood, were and her mother judged according

The practice of saying thought positively wicked, and up her mind that, when she could give the footman private instructions Middleton *is* at home, but do to see you."

Nina's religion was as void of part of her; in fact, she reproduced in her religion thus: God, like such and such virtues, and recompense of such and such duties; them were punished hereafter. "love for his creatures and wish in God than she had been able for herself and a wish for her mother.

"Well, I mean that I think you tell a great many stories

"Mervyn!" she indignantly told a story in my life."

Mervyn was not at all outburst.

"That depends," he said "on what you call a story. I act stories, though we should not tell them. I don't suppose you would do something you had; but I am pretending you don't care about it and all that sort of thing. It's not you don't, Nina," he concluded. The contradiction reached him—"but you."

The boy, in his honest sincerity, had a deeper truth than he had any idea of. He had a form of pride—and poor little form—which is an affectation because it does not exist in ourselves. The scorn affectation or deceit of any kind is based on themselves on being candid and

it's very wicked," she could not. pent-up tears *would* come, and a violent fit of crying. "Oh Mervyn, I love him so *awfully*, that I cannot talk about it; and . . . and . . ."

But in a minute Mervyn's arms were round her, and he was asking her pardon for having made her unhappy, and would never never mention the subject again.

Nina allowed herself to be comforted, and did not bear him any grudge.

"I don't mind *you* knowing I love him, as long as you don't tell anyone else," she said. "And Mervyn, with her, promised eagerly. But the next day she bore fruit in after the same, and bore fruit in after the same."

Another time, Mervyn had some pictures in a Scripture story on Sunday afternoon; and Nina, who had been every now and then by what she heard him saying, listened.

When the little boy had gone

"Well, but tell me just what you said to him. I want to hear how you said it."

"I told him it was because I loved them so much that He loved them. Then Edmund asked me how I could love even more than our mothers love Him. I don't know how else to explain. But I couldn't say that, could I?" And the peculiar expression on his face, which always broke out when he thought of his mother.

No answer from Nina.

"Mother says," he went on, "that God sends us mothers to love Him. We couldn't, she says, if we didn't love Him all at once, because He teaches us to love our mothers by that we learn to love Him. It isn't quite easy, doesn't it, Nina?"

"Yes—but—suppose," said Nina, "suppose we don't love our mothers, how can we learn then?"

"Oh, but then I never heard of that, you know."

A very curious expression on her face at these words. She looked surprised, and said a good deal if she chose to make an effort, she restrained herself, and a sort of things?"

"Oh, all the right things, obedient, and kind to everyone, to people who want help, keeping quiet and not being put out when they don't know you, you know them all, Nina, as what I mean is, that when we are loving God, whether we are loving Him, because we are trying to please Him."

"But, Mervyn," she objected, "all that. One reads in little stories of people doing so, and in the Bible that is all; but *I* never saw anyone really do it."

Mervyn looked at her in astonishment for a minute or two, and then said, "All right, you don't know mother as I do."

"Does she *always*?" asked Nina.

"*Always*," he answered proudly.

underneath was written, 'H good.' I used to say it was of her. She always stopped at the same. Then when she to grow like Him, I used to grow like her. The fact was the same."

"And did you?" asked Nina.

"Oh no," said Mervyn; "I never did to grow like either. I never did."

"Yes, you do," said Nina. "I'm always kind and loving to everybody, and I know how you manage it, but you wish I was like you."

"Like *me*, Nina?" said the scarlet. "Oh, if you only knew how unselfish, or patient, or anything I am."

"Well, but you're better than I am," said Mervyn. "I don't believe I could be so restless. I don't believe I could be so difficult, Mervyn."

"Yes, it is awfully difficult," said Mervyn. "But I don't think things seem so difficult. But I don't think everybody thinks it is their own fault."

Cecily and Edmund.

Aunt Lydia speaks to you :
try to hide from everybody
and”

“Oh, Mervyn,” she exclaim
the impossible things.”

“Just what I said once to

“And what did she say?”

“She taught me this verse:
impossible with men . . .”

“There!” said Nina, trium
says they are impossible too.”

“But wait,” said Mervyn;
You shouldn’t interrupt me in
possible with God.’ That mea
make them possible. I can’t e
Nina; but if you try, you’ll se
and look at the glow-worms.”

Nina sighed deeply; but ever
idea of a Strength outside herse
first time into her mind.

“Wait one minute, Mervyn,”
to ask you one thing.”

world, and that will show you
be. You needn't tell me who

Away flew Nina's thought
stairs, where her baby brother
her heart swelled at the thought
how gladly she would do anything
him; how willingly she would
please him; and how anyone to
gain her affections immediately.
her love for her little brother,
wayward little heart a faint glimpse
of that higher love which works
will and to do of His good pleasure.

"I see, Mervyn," she said, after
"and now I am ready to look at the

Mervyn's influence gradually
Imperceptibly she softened, and
reserve. This, in its turn, acted upon
found in her more and more of a sym-
panion, he grew happier and more re-
life. They became the most inseparable
companions. Mervyn came to her with ev-

violently and at much longer intervals
high spirits and power of enjoyment
selves over the uncongenial circumstances
he found himself thrown; and no
him laughing and talking with Nina,
over the country, would suppose he
sorrow in the world.

On their return to the school spirits gave way.

Nina waited till Cecily had gone then came up to the window where

"What is the matter, Mervyn?"

"Oh, Nina!" he exclaimed, with a
"I do want mother so badly."

Nina bent down and kissed his forehead in her old answer.

"She will soon be back again."

"No one seems to love anyone in the house—
—he went on passionately—"it is a dream
to be in."

Nina was powerless to comfort him, how true it was. Had she not often felt the same feeling herself?

But she had a cure which had never failed at such times. She would try its power.

"Come and see Totty," she whispered.

The boy raised himself wearily, and looked at her without a word.

So the two children stole up stairs softly along the passages to the bedroom.

But no sound came from the kneeling in the darkness, and began it—alone.

“Come away now,” he whispered, and taking her unresisting hand, they returned, as noiselessly to the now dark and silent school-room.

“Come out,” said Mervyn. “I back into that dreary room.”

So they went down a little back and opened a side door.

The moon was shining peacefully on the lawns and gardens as the children stole over the grass, and made fantastic shadows of their little figures.

Lights were seen at the dining-room, and the voices of the gentlemen within as they sat over their wine.

“Come into the shrubbery,” whispered Mervyn.

The way there led them past the dining-room window, and they could see in. The gentlemen were sitting in groups all over the room. One old lady to whom Mrs. Middleton

"What is it?" asked Mervyn. "or a man with his head in his hand."

"They say it's a pair of brothers," answered, smiling. "They fought on moonlight night, for the love of the both were killed. So they are dead arm-in-arm for ever on moonlight have eyes blazing like live coal, the hatred they bear one another. you, sir, it's all nonsense—it's just thing more. Good-night to you." passed on.

"Did you ever hear the story?" asked Mervyn, as they walked along.

"No," she answered. "I have heard say the shrubbery was haunted; but more. I hate ghost stories."

"Do you?" he said. "I think it fun. Why should you mind? You them, do you?"

"No," she answered; "not exactly frighten me all the same, and I think

in the light of the silvery moon
sound to be heard, and then
dazzled by the glitter of the
waters. The peace of it, and
affected Mervyn strangely.

"Oh, Nina!" he exclaimed,
think Heaven must be like this,
Nina didn't answer.

"Don't you often wonder
like?"

Still no answer.

"Why don't you speak, Nina
talking about Heaven?"

"Yes—no—I mean I don't know
about it."

"But don't you often wonder about
it?"

"No, I don't think I do. But
talking about it if you like. What do
you like?"

"I don't know exactly. One thing I
don't like, and that's Granton."

"I don't . . . quite understand,"

"I mean that in Heaven everybody

being with God that will *mal*
Heaven. Do you know she *say*
to go to Heaven if God were *no*
Nina looked very puzzled, *an*

"In Thy presence is the *ful*
Mervyn; "that is her favourite *ve*
She says it explains it so well. *L*
it, Nina?"

"Do I understand what?"

"Why that some day *we shall l*
that we shall only be happy *where*
that may be."

"No," she said, hardly above a

"Sometimes I think you never *w*

"Do *you ?*"

"Well, just a little. I *understa*
you see. I know that I love *mothe*
I am happiest when I am with *her*.
helps me to see that some day, *wh*
as much as that, I shall be *happiest* *v*
says I shall understand it better *and*

"But why do you say I *shall nev*
it?"

seized with a superstitious dread of shadows be?"

The gardener's story, so late self upon her unwilling attention all she told herself to the contrary deny the witness of her own eyes showed her, advancing steadily forms, arm-in-arm, with eyes like times sensitive and imaginative, and just then strung to their highest the scene around, the thoughts on had been so lately dwelling, all come out of the commonplace, and to in stituous dread. She felt herself standing on the narrow boundary-line the real from the unreal, the *natural* natural; and she was, for the moment distinguish between the *material* and world. Only one thought was clear she had never come. She shivered at approach of the shadows, and longed to back. Not only did she dread them but she felt the thought of them would

"How many children has Middleton

"Oh, a large family; seven or eight,

"I saw a very pretty little boy at the window this evening, but he looked terrible. What is the matter with him?"

"Well, that's a sad business. He has lost a day's health since he was born. I know he has struggled on so long. But he is not to live to grow up, poor little fellow . . . fellow!

And the voices and footsteps passed on the other side of the water, and were at a distance. Like birds of evil omen they flew, and everything rejoiced at their departure. The air grew still again, and the sweet scents resumed their sway; and the moon shone peaceful as before. Only one thing was left. The trees, waving slightly in the breeze, would bend their heads and listen, as if waiting for the missing sound, as if listening for the one who would speak again of love and Heaven. They waited and listened in vain. When the boat reached one of the two little figures in

room, now full of gentlemen, laughing and drinking tea.

The child, flitting by in the darkness to see her mother, the gayest of the herself and chatting gaily; had time even door open, and the two smokers entered very one who had pronounced Totty rant take a chair by her mother's side laughing, into a conversation with her.

The child could hear the mother's voice even at that distance, and it jarred she turned shudderingly away.

"Can she know?" she asked herself "really know?"

Only too readily the answer came under quick stern judgment of the young.

"She knows, and she does not care."

Wildly her heart swelled with the notion that Totty should be so despised for. It bore down even the fresh hope which she had been overwhelmed just

She let Mervyn lead her upstairs

these thoughts recur. For what were the fantastic terrors to those which assailed her pillow, and drive all sleep away?

Ah! belief in ghosts may indeed be in our highly civilised day, yet are there some who, in all our enlightenment, we shall never see. Ghosts in white garments, shadowy headless knights, with other creations of the long-past age of ignorance and superstitious torturing anxieties, haunting fears, and horrors less dread: *these* are the ghosts that men dream in their night slumbers, and they will walk through our lives till time shall be no more.

"Oh no, I won't, Mervyn; I

"Why, last Sunday you drove
book twice, and tumbled over
time you stood up."

"There'll hardly be room to
There are such a lot of people
think there are four ladies besides
six gentlemen besides papa. He
will be!"

"Why do you want to sit
Mervyn, as he wrote down a
letter.

"You're so kind, and find me
never will."

"Why don't you find them before

"Such a trouble," she sighed;
remember those horrid old Roman times
it was so silly of them to have letters
don't you? V.'s and X.'s, and all that.

Mervyn laughed. "All right; I'll
Cecily evinced much delight.

"I think it's rather fun having a
in the pew," she went on. "I like seeing

court the evening before through window.

"These are my little girls," she said, "and this is my nephew, Mervyn. Come and say 'How do you do?'"

Mervyn was up in a moment, face and outstretched hand. Nina came and shook hands without speaking, shy and frightened. Her sudden entrance had alarmed her, conscious directly of rough hair and

The difference between her complexion and those of her nephew struck her forcibly, and she looked much annoyed.

"Come forward, Cecily. What for, and why do you put yourself forward?"

Cecily blushed all over, and said something unintelligible.

"Why can't you say 'Good-morning' and not like a little charity-girl. I don't shake hands properly."

"My hand is inky," she said, turning

spoilt her good looks, and daughters for appearing to suffer. He felt that they had been a failure, and had carried all before him. He was angry with *him*. He looked bright, and so pleasant, that the old lady should have been kinder to him. She left the room in a hurry, and went to put on her things for

As soon as Nina was ready, she joined Mervyn, and they both went to the room window, watching the party on the lawn.

"How smart they all are," said Mervyn, "the gowns and the parasols; even the sun. There goes Uncle Rowley, in his coat and a flower in his button-hole. Lydia? Oh! there she comes. She is so smart. Look what a hunt she's having."

Mrs. Middleton heard voices, and

"What have you lost, Aunt?" said Mervyn.

go the same way as the drawing-room avoided stiles and gates, so they arrived first, and established themselves before came.

Mervyn sat between Nina and Cecily, three were told by Madame to take up a room as possible. She herself contrived to squint into a little corner up against a pillar, as flat as pancake.

Cecily proceeded to announce everybody in a loud whisper as they arrived.

"There's Mr. Mellish the miller, and his wife. Here comes the butcher and his wife. They haven't brought their little boy to-day. Perhaps he's got a cold. Oh! look at the turnpike woman. She's got a new bonnet! She hasn't had one for a year. Here's poor old Langley; see how bent double he is. Oh, Mervyn, isn't it fine! Look at his smock-frock. Oh, Mervyn, isn't it fine! Look at his garden and his two daughters. He's got a neckcloth is; he can have a day's work. He only wears it on

than ever. In the middle of raised her eyes. Just at that measured tones from the father and thy mother." Clear of Mervyn's voice, and his eye thoughts had flown. Deep in her face, and from the tightly came no sound at all. The clerk text, "In Thy presence is the fulness," exchanged a glance with Nina, ledged with her eyes. The sermon affected her strangely. It was plain; but it recalled Mervyn's words, water, and seemed to make clear tried to explain. When the clerk happy homes, warmed by family all at sea; such happiness found a loveless home. But when he went affections, she could think of her life placing herself in fancy by his bed dawned more clear. Thus does the weak things of the world to work purposes. For when the sermon

way on, and Mervyn was running
sently he fell back, and came to

"Nina, why do you stay behi

"I don't know."

"What is the matter, Nina?"

"I don't know."

"Come and talk," he said, pu
Madame. Nina did not resist h

"The clergyman said just t
didn't he?" he said triumphant
of her all the time. Who we
Nina?"

"Totty," she answered, rou
by his sympathetic appreciation.
Mervyn; didn't you?"

And she looked rather anxio

"Oh yes," he said warmly; "
word."

Just then Colonel Middleton
to Mervyn, and the boy ran a
regretting that their conversation
ruptly broken off, Nina did not re
state in which he had found her

received with acclamations by the say.

"But I don't like leaving you alone," he said, as they sat together in the waiting for the hour to come; "shan't dull and lonely?"

Nina had certainly felt a little disappointed. She had learnt to prize him much, and to look forward to their life together; but she was glad he should change. So she did not let her own lament appear.

"I shall go to bed soon," she answered.

"Yes; and I'll come and tell you all my way to bed," he said eagerly.

It was an unfortunate evening for her left alone; for she was still haunted by what she had overheard the night before, and was full of fears about her little brother. Caught a fresh cold a day or two before, and nights running she had found him at coughing.

When Mervyn was gone down stairs,

CHAPTER V.

A Midnight Scene.

COLONEL and Mrs. Middleton ball the next evening, and as they it Mrs. Middleton mused with gr the events of the evening. She ha very successful. Her party had e she had provided some of the I room; and she herself had bee nearly all the quadrilles and lanc a great satisfaction to her, beca a little shaky about her age, al that she was considered a middl husband looked, and was, so her, that she was constantly in c for his mother.

They reached home at 2 o'clock; and after wishing he Mrs. Middleton went slowly up

"Too bad of Wilson," muttered M
"she accustoms him to this walking
and now he can't sleep without it."

She walked on; but the wailing in
she stopped again to listen.

"Perhaps he is not well. I think
and see what is the matter; but I mu
gown first."

She went into her dressing-room,
her maid; but the sound of crying purs
there, and she began to get uneasy.

"Go up to the nursery, and see
matter with Master Thomas," she said
soon as her maid appeared.

She walked up and down rather rest
while. "So tiresome, if he is going to
Wilson is away."

Mrs. Middleton had no experience of
her children had been strong; and Tott
exception, she had always given over
Wilson in matters of health. She thoug
difficulties presenting themselves, and it

less in the absence of the nurse; nursery-maid was helpless too.

It was such a sudden change she had left—so quick a transition on which her mind had been so her fear she jumped to conclusion a new sensation for her. She had or conceived the possibility of the idea rushed upon her, a fear rose in her breast, and still Totty, of all her children, was least spare. "He is the only one ever comes to be kissed, or show said an unwonted voice in her personal responsibility, too, weight she advanced very nervously in it was with her usual imperious motioned away the nursery-maid on the bed.

But she had forgotten how dance would be to the child—satin and flowers coming into her

Mrs. Middleton and Jane both
be raving, till the latter perceived
just caught the necklace and
Middleton's neck, making them gasp.

"I think it's the diamonds,
timidly; for all the servants were
Middleton.

"Then undo the thing and tell
mistress, harshly; "and be quick

She came near and held Jane
Jane should unfasten the clasp.
light played upon her tiara, and
again.

"Her hair . . . the fire! . . .

With no gentle hand Mrs.
tiara from her head and thrust it
and bracelets, into Jane's hand.

"Take them and throw them
she exclaimed. Her voice sour
and the hand which held out the
a little; but her face was immov

"Totty, don't you know man
bending over the child.

"But, my dear little boy," she
in despair, "I don't know Dinah.

All the mother was awake in
felt she would give anything in
able to find out what the poor li
and to be the one to soothe him

He was getting very excited, a
sleep seemed slighter every mom
made him cough more violently;
was getting quite alarmed about h

Anxiety had the effect of mak
she turned sharply round upon Ja

"How is it you can't remembe

"I'm very sorry, ma'am," ans
it's clean gone out of my head.
in a minute if we could find i
quite well, for it's sleep he want
thing."

"But what is to be done if w
sleep?" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton.
is there no one in the house w
child sung to sleep, night after ni

There, standing in the doorway was in her little white nightgown were bare. Her dark hair hung over her shoulders, and she carried a little basket. The light, shining on her features, gave her handsome little face, wearing its expression. Steadily she advanced towards her mother, bending over towards the door, did not perceive her, and nearer she came, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and yet having in them a gleam of vision, as if they reached on to her side, and saw nothing either to the right or the left on the way. Still Mrs. Middleton looked round. Totty began tossing her head lessly than ever, perpetually moving her head so sleepy. Sing Dinah, mamma

"My poor little boy," exclaimed Mrs. Middleton.
"I wish I could. But I don't know how to do it."
I never heard it."

"I can sing it," said a clear voice from the nursery.
by; and Mrs. Middleton, turning round,

said: "Carry me, Nina; put me to
answered, "Yes, darling, I will."

Mrs. Middleton watched her
She saw Nina put down the lar
over Totty, push back the hair f
arrange his nightgown about his
with astonishment, the eyes that
at her, assume the glow of tend
saw the love and the pity brea
parts of the face, till the child se
and she was too bewildered to sp

"Sing Dinah, Nina; sing Dina

"I will, darling, I will."

Did that soft whisper come
that cold imperious child? How
him in her arms, and how confid
head on her shoulder, and his arr
Fearing that he may be cold, she
shawl round him, carefully envelo
feet. The oft-repeated entreaty
sponse now, and softly the qu
through the room, and the plain
child ceases.

THROWN TOGETHER

could not tell *why* that long
breast to do for her boy who
desired, nor why her heart was so
ple. And then to see another—
own child—step in where there
her, and do what she had been
accomplish! And do it, too, in su
way. *That* was what galled her,
both so independent of her, that
was an outsider, a looker-on; she,
who had always been accustomed
and to be put before everybody
nobody. It was a sore humiliation
and her pride were alike hurt by

“Why do I not gain my child?”
she asked herself bitterly, as she
paced up and down—both seeing
her, so near to each other.

In spite of herself, she was fond
them; in spite of herself, she admired
them. In spite of herself, Nina
bending over the sleeping boy,
filled her with a new feeling. She

iced it. Generally, she ascribed Nina's face to the child's nature, proud, unaccountable. But how is now? How could she mistake which pervaded every line of the bending over the sleeping boy?

Nina, all this time, was quite unconscious of her mother's presence. She was entirely absorbed in her little brother, and had forgotten her anxiety for him. Up and down and down, still softly singing the melody, watching with trembling anxiety through the window, lest the child should awake.

Satisfied at last that he was sleeping, she signed to the nursery-maid to take him to bed, and then gently laid him down. At last she continued singing, lest the child's motion should rouse him.

Her labour of love completed, she sat on a chair exhausted, arms and knees trembling under the boy's weight.

Mrs. Middleton's impulse was to take her arms and thank her, so great was the

CHAPTER VI.

War to the Knife.

MRS. MIDDLETON woke the next morning that Totty had passed a good night, and well. Things often look very different in the morning, and she told herself she had been alarmed. With the night, too, her feeling passed away, and she accepted her weakness with regard to both children.

Nina's conduct, certainly, still surprised her, but it ceased to inspire her with emotion. She mused upon it for a long time, but could not understand it the least. Totty had the habit to be a great deal with Totty, and that she exercised a very strong influence over him was also very clear.

"I never saw her notice the young man," she reflected.

In vain did Mrs. Middleton try

but rather hoped the nurse might throw some light upon the subject.

Wilson, in defending herself, to throw the blame upon Nina, course, if the child expected his been put to bed, he lay *awake* w.

"What do you mean?" asked

Wilson answered, that for so had been trying to break Totty o seemed a little stronger, and had put him to bed awake; but that returning at supper-time to see he on, she had found Miss Nina sing

The conversation lasted some was over, Wilson was dispatched to tell Miss Middleton she was to her mother's dressing-room.

When the nurse was gone, Mrs to the open window and leaned ou ing on the events of the night, a passed between her and Wilson. ing to settle in her own mind wh say to Nina when she appeared.

weapons were a strong will, termination, and the power of a see how she fared with them.

Three months ago that day faced the struggle of their lives; they have theirs before them now . . .

"Do you want me, mamma?" Mrs. Middleton started as she

sounded in the room, and *in* ^{her} ~~the~~ a little. It brought back so clear last night, and the way in which *her* ~~the~~ sure tones had fallen on her ear. She recalled so vividly her feelings round and confronted the little with its streaming hair, and the serenity with which she had met the glance of eyes. She felt as if she *could* not again, lest she should read in the which had dismayed her before.

And then the cold ring in the different, independent tone. Just so her ear at midnight; hurting and fell. It hurt and galled her now.

the girl's appearance, but Mr
eling was personal relief.

The pale little school-room
different creature to the beautif
tion of last night; and she felt l
thought of the task which lay be

"Come in, and shut the door,

Nina obeyed, and came and
her mother, who had meanwhile
an arm-chair. And then there wa
waited quietly for her mother to
Middleton felt that nothing was
There she sat, and there, opposi
erect, motionless little figure.

The ticking of the clock, and
the fire, were distinctly heard in
reigned in the room. Mrs. Mide
provoked with herself at last for n
to begin, but feared being at a dis
hurried into the discussion *too ungu*

"Totty is better," she said at las

Clearly Nina had not expected

"Tell me **instantly** when it

"I don't know **the** exact hour

"Was it **before** your hair was

"Yes."

"Was it **before** you were d

"Yes."

"Was it **directly** you were

"No."

"*When* was it **then**? Speak

Very **unwillingly** the answer

fore I was called, **directly** I was

what o'clock it was."

A short silence after this.

that sore jealous feeling increas

saw that Nina's anxiety had be

own, and that she had been be

enquiring after the boy's heal

and lost her temper.

"And pray how long is it

fancy to Totty?" she said, in a

manner. "I thought you were

with the younger ones."

Poor Nina! This sudden

DOWN TOGETHER
"How long," she resumed
been in the habit of going
Totty is in bed?"

Nina winced a little, and
can't remember."

"That is nonsense, Nina."

"I really can't, mamma."

"Then think."

The ticking of the clock
the fire again made themselves
Middleton wondered if the
and what course was to be
not.

But Nina raised her head

"It may be two years, or
for so long that I can't remem

Mrs. Middleton was quite
astonishment. "Why, Wilson s
a new thing the last few days

"Wilson didn't know."

"Did no one ever know?"

"No, no one . . . except .

"Except who?"

UNKNOWN TOG
"At any rate, now that I
You must never do it again,

The hot blood came r
face and neck, and she pre
together. She lost all cont
moment.

"Never do it again!" she
"never go and see Totty at n
mamma, you can't mean it!"

"But I *do* mean it," ansv

"And why?" burst out N

Mrs. Middleton, taken b
say it was for Totty's own
what Wilson had said abou
expecting his sister; but N
imperious manner put her l
herself *why* she should cor
reasons. Her innate selfisl
and, forgetting the child's :
only thought of her own, an
idea of her authority being
"That is no business c

thing to your mother?—a wre
you!”

An angry retort rose to N
heard a sound in the gard
checked herself and listened
voice, calling to her in tones
citement.

“Nina! Nina! where are
letter from mother, and I wa
Oh, Nina! it is such a dear le

And a sound followed as
turally kissing the paper. I
confronting each other with
stormy faces, both heard the
embraces; both recognised
tones; and both instinctively
one from the other.

Mrs. Middleton turned
window, and pretended to
Nina hastily dashed away a
to her eyes.

“You are the coldest, r

I should break my word.
me."

Her eyes filled with tears
alas! as we have said, Mrs. [unclear]
mind had changed too, and
herself for having shown weak-
child for having noticed it.

She thought, too, that Nina
the sense of being defeated, and
upon the temporary advantage
turned round, and spoke sharp-
plainly that she looked upon the
as those of task-master and slave
her commands accordingly. [unclear]
she had been thwarted so resolutely
she was determined it should be

Nina's spirit was roused
angrily and disrespectfully. The
of good behaviour was thrown
deletion realised that she had re-
fluence over the girl whatever.

In that galling moment she
obedience is worth which is not

CHAPTER 1

Nina.

ON the night of the countess awakened by the wheels of the her father and mother home. she had been unable to divine that Totty was worse; not, as account of what she had over but because he really seemed and to be weaker and more like

Her room was hot, and she her door. It was then that she and coughing; and after listening she made up her mind to go matter; for she remembered and that Totty was not much nursery-maid. She was surprised she reached the nursery-door to hear voices and see lights

had presented herself before her
tion; the summons was so un-
much over what could be want-
cluded she was to be lectured
the night before.

Her mother's first words
directly. She had realised that
shared her anxiety about Totty,
drawn towards her than she had
But as the conversation went
pure feelings had been aroused
all, breaking forth every now and
dark clouds of dissension, she
gleams of her mother's newly-
Totty. Then, too, she had been
prise, mingled with a kind of p-
how overcome Mrs. Middleton's
between Mervyn's love for his mother
indifference.

She had so keenly realised her
vyn's arrival, the great want of love
that she was half sorry for her
saw she was going to realise it

As the day wore on, she accused him of doing all she might on his behalf. She tried more to inspire him.

tried more to inspire her mother with
Why had she not told her of the con-
overheard in the garden, and bold-
were true? And why had she irri-
into laying this command upon her?
she regarded her mother's prohibit-
she felt she must try to obey it.
mised; no, a promise was too bin-
once given, she would not have be-
But she was going to try and act u-
injunction, if possible, by doing all
keep away from Totty that night.
Mervyn was gone down to dessert,
to her bed-room, undressed, and g-
But she had not lain down lo-
of terror came over her—a terror
a terror of the howling of the wind

to listen, her lips nearly touching h
 When she raised her head again, sl
 that she was not alone in the roo
 light she saw a figure sitting by c
 beds; and in that figure she recognis

Very few and stern were the
 from Mrs. Middleton's lips. She c
 all till they got into the passage; a
 her daughter that she had not be
 she would be guilty of so flagran
 obedience, but had stationed hers
 to see. That she should for th
 against the repetition of such a br
 mands. That sure and certain
 adopted to ensure an observance
 that in the meantime Nina was to
 in disgrace, and not to attempt to
 any communication with her mothe
 whatsoever.

Mrs. Middleton then disappear
 sage, and Nina went into her ow
 It was a very wearied little bei

quietly in the evening. But, told over him and heard that dream, Wilson would very likely not would put down his languor sleeplessness of Monday night. Totty had cried "Wolf" too often likely to take alarm. All, then, self; and her whole heart was her object. Probably she would alive to Totty's condition, had she had overheard. His appointment went for a minute into the nursery in her resolution. Wilson perhaps Nina would have tried to with her own fears. All the more trying to shape a plan, but it know how to set about it. She desperation, of going straight to then she remembered that she would had been forbidden to approach whatsoever. Besides, the futility to Mrs. Middleton could not but passed a restless morning, and

short, that the night would soon then it would be more difficult doctor.

"If I am to do it at all," she loud, "I must do it at once. But

She got up and walked restlessly the room. Suddenly it came in last resource, that she would make father. It must, indeed, have been born of despair; but once taken more.

She left the school-room, went to the smoking-room, and knocked. There was no answer, so she opened the door in. The room was empty, and she knew her mind that he was already gone. She was too late. She went hastily to see if his hat were missing. But there, and his great-coat, glove and put ready. He was evidently gone. It was nearly half past twelve by the hall clock, so that if he would go soon. Would it

The Storm.

horrible noise. Middleton, fortunately
Mrs. Middleton, fortunately
the middle.
away in then rang for the butl
He him who was in the ha

away from the middle. Then rang for the butler. He asked him who was in the hall.

necessity of care in dipping his pen when sitting at that particular writing was so very likely to be spurted out behind.

"It only wants a little care," he said, "the commonest care would prevent it."

The footman listened respectfully, but as he was innocent of writing in the drawing-room, Colonel Middelton did not fall upon his ear with that such eloquence was entitled.

Pleased, however, with the sound of his voice, and having his hand well in, Colonel Middelton now made some remarks on the neatness of the coal-scuttle, and had some hints to offer on the scouring and the same.

But no servant could stand before him for the neglected duties of a footman; the footman hastily reminded his master that the scouring and scouring were not in his commission, and referred him to a certain "Ann," who was to prove the delinquent.

"Oh! please Rowley,
have you been tearing up?

"Only notes that mig
go. I can't think why y
have been answered."

"But how do you know
I wish you would not do t
sulting me. I do believe yo
one I was just answering.
vancing to the table, and l
torn papers, "yes! *that* you h
to shreds. That is Lady D
was an invitation to go the
haven't a notion what *day* she
it is very tiresome!"

Colonel Middleton felt rath
quite know how to defend him

"Well, you will be the
Middleton, biting her lips to k
tion, "for you will lose your *sho*

Colonel Middleton was alw
to see his wife in a rage, and pr
vokingly indifferent; but the inci

very well to-day, or else you are
is nothing the matter with Totty.

"Oh yes, papa, there is!" she
sure there is! I don't think ma
she would send for the doctor
please ask her to send for him?"

"Get up, my dear child, and
chair. I don't quite understand

* Nina seated herself in the a
gan to pour out all that sh
say.

Colonel Middleton saw, by her
the nervous twist of her hands,
much agitated, and got puzzled
sufficient cause.

"Did you come here to tell me

"Yes, papa."

"And why?"

"I thought you would ask me
the doctor."

Colonel Middleton looked mu

"Oh, my dear, I never interfer
♦ and the nurses saw any occa

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ing to the coachman out riding
enormity?"

The child was incapable of asking
shook her head.

"So you want to make me tell
I couldn't undertake to mediate
really. It's not in my line."

"Oh, papa! I don't want you
about me, only to try and persuade
the doctor for Totty."

"But why—supposing, for the
ment, that Totty was ill (which
you think you know better than
and the nurses? Why, in short
the matter into your hands at a
you?"

"I love him so, papa!"

The words burst from the girl
a cry. They seemed to escape her
and she clasped her hands together
Her dark eyes glowed with
to say how powerful to her that

was very strongly marked. Earnest written on every line of hers, careless on his.

And in that moment the child saw that what she felt he would never what she comprehended so clearly he would never understand.

Swift as an arrow there shot into conviction that she was wasting her time in her strength in vain; that she make more impression on him than fall would make upon the shifting sand next wave would efface altogether. thought smote upon her, despair on heart; despair which would have been contempt, if her sore heart had had other feeling.

She turned away without a word, door behind her.

We need not follow the poor little stairs, nor through the evening that for as night closed in, all her fears returned doubled intensity. All hope of the D

realised—Totty is taken ill; and
and the doctor is far away!

With a beating heart she springs
crying, "Oh! why didn't they listen
wouldn't they believe what I said?"

Vague ideas of running as she
and meadows to fetch him pass through
who would be so fleet as she?

There is no feeling of triumph
child's breast that the event has passed
and that she is justified in her foreboding
only a deadly fear.

She gropes her way to the door,
every limb, and grasps the handle in
hand. It seems to resist, and she steels
and tries again. Still she cannot open
handle turns, but the door will not open.

"I must have bolted it by mistake,"
impatiently, and she pulls nervously
bolt. All to no purpose; and the child
more and more agitated.

Suddenly a thought seems to dart
mind, and words to which she has hitherto

meaning flash clear across her brain. Her mother
 struck her in!

This, then, is the punishment of which
 ! this the sure and certain means she
 ed to ensure compliance with her commands
 when a mighty tempest passed over the soul
 child, and her very being seemed shaken
 force of the passions which stirred within her
 ing herself upon her knees, she called aloud
 fury and despair: "Mamma! mamma! I h
 wish you were dead!" Crouching again
 or, she hammered upon it with her hands
 "Open the door! Open it, I say! Open
 !"

A loud clap of thunder was the answer, rattling
 knocking over her head till the very room
 to shake. It was a kind of relief to
 t seemed to express all the wild feelings
 ere raging in her heart—wrath, rebellion,
 and revenge.

Lightning flashed into the darkness of
 revealing the little figure crouching by
 10*

door. It played about her, and she felt **no** flashed in her face, and she did not start. The thunder hurled with her anathemas **aga** mother, and she flashed upon her in **ma** with the lightning.

Down came the torrents of rain, **beating** the window as if the very doors of heav opening and the waters pouring out.

It was a fearful storm; but the tempe without was as nothing compared **with the** raging in the heart of the child. To her of tears did not come. The **fury** of the was spent, for the danger is **over when** comes. Not so with the child. The stor fury was still raging, for the danger is no the tears come.

And *what* is to bring them to her eyes! eyes are hard and **dry**; the little heart stone, and the hot parched **lips** have r softening in them. But is *anything too* the Lord? He who **smote** the Stony Roc waters gushed out, and ran in the dry p soften the stony heart; and "Rivers

from mine eyes" will He make the proud

He who rides upon the whirlwind and direct
storm—who rebuked the raging of the wind
waves so that they ceased, and there was
calm—will direct the whirlwind of anger,
to the surging waves of passion, "Peace!

exhausted for a moment, the child lay quiet
here came into her mind, she knew not where
the memory of Mervyn kneeling by Tom
le. Then the thought of the moonlight on
and the accents of Mervyn's voice.

in heaven," it seemed to repeat, "they all
ne, and you love so few. Sometimes I think
I never understand . . ."

forgive us our trespasses," it said again,
give them . . ."

na, why wouldn't you join with me? . . .
peace of the well-remembered scene,

lights of love and heaven connected with
upon the child as she lay, like a cool
in a burning forehead; like oil on the

pestuous waters; like the chime heard through the howling of the wet night.

It seemed like a whisper from something which she in her fury or thing to do with; which she was to look upon, or holy enough to un

Opposed to the atmosphere of w in which she was now plunged, it such peace and love, and it seemed Heaven itself could not seem holier, heaven, and heaven is peace and love heaven itself seem more far away!

Given up to all wicked feelings, she as it were, cut off from heaven, with its universal love, a prey to hatred and re fit now to look from a distance on tha peace and purity. So do we picture to the Lost looking from their Place of Da the Heaven which might have been the

Struck with horror at the contrast, to escape from so terrible a conditio aloud in her desire to be saved

"Mervyn! Mervyn!" Thus do we ever seek
 only comfort and support; flying ever first to
 our man; forgetting that we have a friend
 much closer than a brother, and that He is

For all answer came into her mind again
 the same words as before.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive
"

Nina, why would you not join with me? .
 I will! indeed I will!"

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive
 trespass against us . . . Oh God! help me
 I so wicked! Help me!"

Then came a pause in the storm, both
 without; and there was a calm. The silence
 seemed made a sound in the passage and
 the child listened intently.

Was it a voice? It was It
 . . . She listened intently again. The
 hardly above a whisper, but the voice
"

"Mervyn!" she exclaimed; "oh I
you?"

"Yes, Nina, I've been here some
were never quiet a moment, and I
you hear."

"Oh, Mervyn," said Nina, "unlock

"Hush, Nina. I can't. The key
Listen to what I am going to say. T
come, and he is in Totty's room."

"Oh, thank God! thank God!" sh
and the glad relief of tears came at
be all right now."

"Don't cry so, Nina dear. I will g
I can find out more. Keep quiet till I
And please don't cry."

No need to tell her to keep quiet
storm-tempest has spent its fury, and
feelings have fled away, dispelled by the
of his voice. The tears came raining
he had left her, cooling the burning eye
and refreshing as a soft summer shower
feelings came over her, feelings of repe

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half pride, half joy, that Totty
cognised as an object worthy the
tion of the whole household.
house is up," she repeated, hal
thinking about Totty."

A long time elapsed. Anx
creep into her heart again, w
of a carriage driving away
and she started to her feet w
sudden chill at her heart.

"He is going because he
exclaimed, wringing her hands,
window. Her suspicion, alas! w
when she caught sight of the ca
the distance; and from that mom

Then came the longing, so
before, to see him—if only for
with him, to hear his voice ag
herself on her knees and sobbe
me! oh God! help me! By some
me to him and let me

Her face was hid
was deaf to any soun

did not hear the unlocking of the door, nor
some one had entered; till a hand was laid
on her shoulder, and a voice said "Come."

Raising her head, she saw her mother standing
before her, and knew that her prayer was answered.
As something in her mother's white face and
hands that checked the words which trembled
from the child's lips, and she answered her never.

But as in a dream, she rose and followed
through the familiar passages, into the familiar
room, just as she was, in her little white night-
gown, with her dark hair streaming.

In a dream, she was conscious of the many
weeping nurses, of the father; but she seemed
in the room, of her father; but she seemed
no concern with anyone or anything but
the thought of nothing, saw nothing, but

Everyone drew back to allow her to pass; and
moved on alone to the little white bed, where
all little figure was lying. The world seemed
empty, and to leave the brother and sister alone.

She knelt down by his side and
little hands.

“Totty,” she whispered.

The blue eyes opened, and
over the colourless little face.

“Nina,” he just managed
Nina.”

And as she kissed him—h

can't smile broke

breath, “kiss me,

CRAP

LADY WARD

been t
once. I
at Grant
Such was
and the nex
study, writin
the evening
no one h
ents.

for he wanted to relieve his full heart out to his mother a recital of the sad last few days. "Her ladyship" conveyed him. He had not a notion of whom to speak. Slowly he opened the letter and slowly he read the contents. But he did not read it in. He read it again, and then again at it. Suddenly his colour deepened and he raised his hand up to his head as if to steady himself and to try to understand what he was told in the telegram say?

By degrees the meaning dawned slightly. He gathered that she was coming, why, or how, or when, he could not comprehend.

"She is coming!" he said softly to himself, "she is coming here!"

Still he could not quite take it in at once what those few words really meant.

"She is coming on Thursday," he said to himself, "on Thursday morning. Thursday is only two days off. To-day is . . . why

Magdalen *is* there; she *is* standing if he only turns his head, he will s

No need for her to try and att for fear of startling him; no need her beating heart, and softly to name! He was conscious of her —knew the very rustle of her gown of her light footfall—*felt* she was t his eyes with his hand before he her, as if he feared to be dazzle what he had so longed for.

Then, too, suddenly, came misgiving. Would she be change be some alteration? Would it be he remembered — whose picture painting all the time?

But when he really *saw* the his glance rested on the well-known the familiar smile—when he met t shining and glowing with love doubts and fears vanished. He th with a glad cry, and went straig without a word. Nor did he fin

daughter, and painted a vivid picture of the loneliness of the Granton atmosphere which had suffered from it.

His mother drew him to her and said these things, softly whispering, "It is all over now, and Mervyn put his head on her shoulder, and a delicious feeling of security and comfort came into his mind. The recent trouble of his own byegone troubles, and he rejected the subject of Nina.

"I have not seen her this morning," he concluded. "I peeped into her room, and she was asleep."

"Is no one with her?" asked Mervyn. "Has not your aunt been to her?"

"She never goes into Nina's room," said his mother.

"But has the poor child no one to look after? not even the nurse or governess?"

"Oh no, mother! I don't think of it; she is not very . . . not exactly ill, and the governess, you see. I think I am afraid to go to her."

mother's return. He half hoped to and as he went along he had debated self whether he would not wake her. But when he stood by her bed he changed. She looked so pale and he was quite selfish to be glad while she was so unhappy. His breath when his eyes fell upon her face. That that she would wake to the memory deep as his joy; and he felt that to be cruel to rouse her from her quiet pale and ill though she looked, to quietly the sleep of thorough exhaustion time she had forgotten her troubles she would remember them directly he could do or say could comfort her quiet sleep she was enjoying. What for her, loving and willing as he was, consciousness could do?

What would *we* do for our
God giveth His beloved—s

So he sat quietly down by her side should wake up herself. He did not

nervous fancies, from sickness, again need she wrestle wildly fear and dread. The ghost w laid for ever, and the worst i again need she chafe at the fee looked and despised. The little white lamb now, safe in the Sh ewe lamb lying for ever and e his Saviour, above. Never ag beat wildly, and her jealous indi because *he* is not summoned t sence when the guests are assen more highly exalted now! In hi for ever and ever, and the shir What reck he now, that his kn his limbs powerless and weak? to bear him whither his Father w

No thought of self mingled feelings. Long ago Nina's self h Totty; and in her love for him she So quietly, and almost happily found Mervyn sitting by her bed. "Mervyn!" she said, softly.

A more experienced person have taken alarm at her appearance, her hands in his, and said,

"I was afraid of being selfish."

"Tell me all about it," she said as she tightened her hold on him, too tired and too giddy to ask for anything but the truth. "I want so much to hear."

Mervyn instantly poured forth and she listened with an excited

"In thy presence is the fulfilment of my life," he whispered, when he had finished. "Heaven now?"

Her lips quivered as she put

"Oh no, Nina darling!" he said, impulsively, throwing his arms round her. "Can I be quite happy when you are not? If I have got my heaven, you have lost yours."

The pain of her loss, the terror of the void in her life, smote upon Nina. She gave way to a burst of bitter tears. Clinging to Mervyn, she begged him to stay, for she had no one left to love her.

changed; all the decision had gone out of her voice when she tried to speak, and she held out trembled all over. In order that the work had been done. The strong, self-willed Mrs. Middleton, had become a nervous, broken-down woman. A stroke had met and overcome her; had taken away the armour in which she trusted, and left her helpless and defeated in the dust. She had, we said before, lost a child, or conceived the possibility of such a thing. But nevertheless the Terrors had entered her stronghold of her and of her will, had taken away

In the silent watches of the night she was forced to recognise a will stronger than her own, a strength greater, a Power before which she bowed. Nor had she known how to submit. From the moment when, roused by the cry, she had rushed to the nursery and found her broken a blood-vessel, all her power had fled. Utterly unnerved, compared with every maid in the house had been than she.

only felt that the child who co-
tower of strength. The very thou-
eyes and the firm little mouth had
Vividly she had remembered the
the bedroom-nursery, when she
been lulled to sleep, and her own
by the calm influence of the gi-
power. She had felt it might be
had felt she must have it at any
knew the price must be her own
felt she must fetch the girl, though
hand but hers could set the pri-
must reverse her own decree, hers
the punishment she had devised
was one step further into the Valle
but she had hardly seemed to care
She was a vanquished woman
matter?

So, while all were occupied
had stolen away to Nina's room. She
to find the child asleep; had turned
softly, and entered gently, for fear
too suddenly.

morning, and his trivial talking plan it would entail, had driven seen how little the loss personal every word he had let fall ha She had felt as if no one but N cared for the child at all. And send for her, dared not go to her pride—poor woman, she was h now—it was positively from fear.

Such was the state of mind found her when she entered the

Her gentle words of sympathy ton break down at first; but it seemed a relief to her to give poor little fellow's sudden illness

There was silence between cital was over.

"Magdalen," said Mrs. Mid denly, at last, "have you seen since you came?"

"Only Mervyn, dear Lydia."

"Did he mention any of them Edmund?"

been very severe with her. More unhappy the thwarting and the severity were connected my poor little boy. And now I feel would hate me. I know she is one of must either love or hate; and I know she love me. So I am afraid yes, *afraid* to see her. I could not—my heart sad and sore—see hatred in the eyes of child. "Eyes," she added, half to herself look so different. I *could* not be triumphed over, despised"

"Oh, hush! dear, hush!" said Mary, shocked. "Indeed, Lydia, I do not know what you are saying. The stupefied with grief. It seems to me leave her alone. Won't you come see?"

"No, no," said Mrs. Middleton; "indeed I cannot. Besides, I am sure like it. You don't understand how. How should you? You and Mary are different."

"Dear Lydia," remonstrated Mary,

Mervyn had been like him, *you* wouldn't have all this? I mean even if you had had children, stronger and finer than him?"

"God forbid, dear," said Magdalen, "what the girl was driving at. "Do you think that the weakest and least prosperous chances ways the one a mother holds most dear?"

"*She* never did," exclaimed Nina.

"*Who*, dear?" asked Magdalen, bewildered.

"Mamma!" she cried; "she despised him; was ashamed of him; I don't believe she was sorry he is dead."

Magdalen was inexpressibly shocked. Between the mother and daughter seemed hopeless than she had expected. She was wildered, too. Coming fresh from Mrs. Middleton in the abandonment of her grief, the girl's sentiment seemed so contradictory. She could not feeling they were misunderstanding each other that all might be set right between them. But most prominent idea in her mind was that Mrs. Middleton should be put before Mrs. Middleton at all. She was quite sure that the child was much sh

don't think you ought to lose a moment in going to see her."

Her gentle womanly heart smote her as she uttered the words; but foreign as it was to her nature to inflict pain, she felt in this instance that it was the only thing to be done. But she was not prepared for the effect of her words on Mrs. Middleton.

"Ill!" she cried, starting to her feet, and hastily throwing a shawl over her shoulders. "She is dying, Magdalen! I see it in your face. Oh, my God! am I to lose two children in one day? Take me to her. Oh Magdalen, take me quickly."

And she put her hand on her sister-in-law's shoulder for support.

Magdalen answered gently: "Believe me, Lydia, no. She is not so bad as that. Only ill enough to require a mother's care and attention."

"She shall have both," exclaimed Mrs. Middleton. "I would lay down my life for her. I will do anything and everything I can to . . ."

As she was speaking, the door slowly opened and Mervyn entered, leading *Nina by the hand*

Very quietly Magdalen led Mervyn away, closed the door behind her.

So no eye but God's saw the meeting between mother and daughter.

not encourage her to pursue the conversation, so she did not continue it. She merely remarked that Lord Wardlaw would join them at Glen-Mervyn as soon as he was able, but that she did not know when that would be; and then she wished the boy a fond good-night, and begged him to get to bed as quickly as possible, so as to have a good sleep after the exciting events of the day. They had both, certainly, been through a good deal of agitation. Nina, after the meeting with her mother, had broken down altogether, and the doctor, on his arrival, had declared her to be in a very anxious state. She had never left her bed since she had first been laid. The doctor had seemed unstrung, and he had lost his whole nervous system. She had got a chill, too, and towards evening had become feverish and disposed to wander. The doctor's orders that she should be kept perfectly quiet, and not confused by the sight of different faces, were most strictly adhered to, and the children were to be sent away as free of noise and bustle as possible.

Under these circumstances Lady Wardlaw had

had daily telegrams and letters from Granton were on the whole more cheering than others. Magdalen also had satisfactory accounts from her husband of the progress of his affairs in London, and he seemed likely to be able to get away sooner than he had expected. These letters were shared with Mervyn. He had never mentioned his step-father, nor made any enquiry about him. Whether it was from perversity, or sheer forgetfulness, Magdalen could not determine. She knew well Mervyn's power of putting from him subjects that were disagreeable or painful, and she feared sometimes that he had really succeeded in shutting out altogether the fact of Lord Wardlaw's existence. Had it not been that the boy had gone through so much lately, she would have questioned him about it; but he was at times, in spite of their re-union, so cast down and out of spirits, that she did not like to force unwelcome topics upon him. He was sometimes filled with compunction for having left Nina just when she seemed to need him most; he never could speak of Totty without tears; and his anxiety over the telegrams and letters was intense.

spring out of bed with a shout, at the thought that he was really back at Glen-Mervyn. Back at Glen-Mervyn! Back among the much-loved scenes and the familiar surroundings! Back, with his mother at his side, to be parted from her no more!

When he went down-stairs and found her sitting in her usual place at the breakfast-table, he felt as if he had never been away, and as if the last three months had been part of a hideous dream which had disappeared like a ghost at cock-crow. How delightful it was to revisit all the familiar scenes with his mother; to take her to the gate where they had parted, and to feel that all was over. How delightful, later in the day, to pay a visit with her to the Vicarage, and to feel so independent of Gwen and her tactless speeches; to have no concern with the prim little parlour and the stuffed birds; to wander home in the autumn sunset talking it all over, the words tumbling out unrestrainedly as of old, instead of having to write and spell them.

"Oh mother!" he exclaimed suddenly, "I feel

"No," he answered; "I did not interest in them."

"Who did we chiefly talk of and in?" she asked. "Ourselves, I suppose rather unwillingly."

"There is one difference in you than already," she went on. "Your sympathies enlarged, and the range of your existence. We were very happy together here, notwithstanding selfish; so our isolated happiness formed to a close, and we were sent out into the world to form new interests, and to have our sympathies drawn out. Do not for a moment suppose that I think you love me less because of the changes you have seen. For in you, for all the changes you have seen, difference I am glad and thankful to see. For as if 'you and I' were the only two people in the world, and as if there were no world at all but Glen-Mervyn. But now it is different, and I tell you how glad I am that it should be so."

Mervyn, as he walked by his mother and mind full of Nina.

"So you feel no interest in any Glen-Mervyn?" she said presently, finished silent.

He looked up, smiling brightly. "ways right, mother," he said. "Is there in you too, for the changes you have asked after a few minutes. "Have you now outside Glen-Mervyn?"

He put the question rather anxiously up into her face.

"Mervyn," she said—and it was not heard what he had said, for her mind was running away over the fields—"just give the telegraph boy is coming to the house he want to be paid, or what?"

Mervyn went off, and came back with another telegram in his hand.

"There were two," he said. "He ran off so quick, he had not time to say more."

He handed it to his mother, and she read it. Somehow, the

"Mervyn," she said, putting shoulder, "do you remember our that summer night?"

"Yes, mother."

But the answer came in rather voice.

"Have you often thought it over?"

"No, mother."

Magdalen glanced at him quickly, passed over her face.

"You don't mean to say you subject from you, Mervyn, after all these Mervyn nodded.

"I was half afraid of this, from you is a fatal habit of yours, Mervyn. I disappointed."

Mervyn hung his head, without answer. "This cannot go on," she said, very

sooner you turn your thoughts to this better; for you see he is coming to-morrow.

"Who?" said Mervyn, perversely.

She hesitated a minute, and then father."

But now! . . . Now what was the position of the husband she loved and soul; the man who in a flood of her life with sunshine, her the grace and glory of her radiated her present and her future past had never known; and her and disappointments of the moment be lost in the full completeness of happiness! And Magdalen was thought.

"Am I getting selfish?" she asked. "Happiness ought not to make me lose sight and feel for others. Can my nature be selfish?"

But she knew it was *not so*. He who had restored to her the ideal of her girlhood had done not only more. He had also restored to her human nature, and her belief in by bringing before her a living natural goodness can be, exalted and the contact with such a character.

CHAPTER XII.

Meeting of Lord Wardlaw and Mervyn Lyn.

THE next morning's letter about 1
satisfactory as possible. The worst was
she had now only to get up her strength

"I wish she could come
"she would be so happy with us, mother

"I hope she will come when she is
Lady Wardlaw answered; "but I son
if your Aunt Lydia will ever make up
part with her."

A short conversation on the subject
then Mervyn got ready to go as usual
at the Vicarage. As he sped along
autumn woods his thoughts were given
every subject but the impending
completely escaped his memory.
warm welcome from the vicar, who
his pleasure at having him to teach

sitting in the fire-light, waiting. Clinging to the branch of the tree, he showered down golden leaves. He gave to it, he swung himself to the window, his eager eyes sought the loved figure in its accustomed place. A long pause and a long silence. The rustle was audible in the stillness. The howling of distant dogs, the low moans and the distant voices of people passing on their way home. But no nearer.

An old white owl, who had her seat on the tree by the sunlit branches, peered down upon the figure on an upper branch, as if wondering what that sat so very still. The silence was broken last by a low sob, and the hush was deepened. "She doesn't want me; I needn't go. I needn't to give her her tea."

There was a rustle among the leaves. A shower of golden leaves from the tree. The watcher dropped from his seat, and disappeared into the gathering darkness.

be consoled by her soothing kisses, and chances that he was very much wanted that both she and Lord Wardlaw expecting him every moment, and who could have become of him.

"Now, darling," she said gently, "brush your hair and run down. Charlie anxiously expecting you."

"Ain't you coming, mother?" said M blankly.

"No, dear," she answered, quietly; "to dress. We dine earlier to-night. You are not going to persuade your shy!"

Mervyn laughed a little at the shy; and Magdalen, anxious to keep her full vein, talked on to him gaily all the while washing his hands and brushing his hair. He was quite sure he and Lord Wardlaw would do without her, and had made up her mind to them to themselves at first. She had a disposition boy's sociable and genial disposition would make friends directly.

And he looked eagerly up i
face, with flushed cheeks and gl

Lord Wardlaw took both t
his, and returned the gaze with
never turned towards the gun;
on the boy's face, and he made

The past came rushing befor
The likeness of feature and col
indescribable resemblance of voi
expression in the eyes, took h
years, and he seemed to be loc
face of Magdalen Middleton as i
first time he had seen her.

It reminded him so forcibly
ing, riding in the Park, when,
their introduction, his horse had
and, as it recovered itself, she
saying, "*I hope it is not hurt!*"

It was the very same face
manner, the very same words. I
ried straight back to that day, a
he was about to answer as he had

THROWN TOGETHER

know I ought not to have touched tempting."

Lord Wardlaw put his disengaged eyes, and tried to clear away the turn to the present. The sublime and are ever ready to meet and mingle of humour suddenly showed him that might be put upon his behaviour in this, the beginning of their acquaintance that he was a harsh and unforgiving old ogre, in fact. It struck him that he should play a part so far from that he laughed, and with that a bygone years cleared away.

"Never mind the gun, my dear," "I daresay there is no harm done." "Oh! but do let me see," said A and greatly relieved; "it would be a magnificent breech-loader. Look!"

Smiling at his eagerness, Lord Wardlaw sat down, and examined the gun sitting on the top of the packing-

and he was perhaps a little dread the boy in the full glare of the light, his eyes should detect in him some of his father, and so destroy the favor the child was making on him. At every moment as he talked traces of sentiments, tastes, and opinions, to feel the boy would become visible, and he wanted to forget everything and induce a contrary feeling. However, as Mervyn requested, carried the book into his study, and laid it on the hearth, he cast an anxious look at his step-mother, and re-assured when his eye fell on her smiling and beaming face. There was no allusion to anyone but Magdalen, and Lord Linton took a long breath of relief.

Standing on the hearth-rug with
fire, he looked down admiringly
ing over the gun, and went on to
“Do you understand it now?
brief explanation.
“O—

"Quite," answered Merv

"Mother," answered Mervyn, his voice softer, his manner softening.

"Whose mother?" asked Lord Wardlaw presently.

"*Mine*," answered Mervyn, with a certain proud appropriation.

Lord Wardlaw still looked at him, suddenly recollecting himself, he said, "height; yes, I did not understand you of Magdalen."

Lord Wardlaw's voice softened as he pronounced his wife's name, and he said sharply. For there was in the tone of proud appropriation that had been in his own. It might have been its echo.

And at that moment she entered the room. Lord Wardlaw advanced to meet her, unconsciously coming to her, who was in the act of doing the same. The three laughed; but Mervyn's laugh was the soonest, and he brushed past her and went and stood by his mother's side.

love and enjoy his step-father ex-
she was concerned; be perfect to
her, but feel differently in her pro-
contretemps about the chair game
how matters would be. Mervyn
care for her and monopolise her
resent Lord Wardlaw's interference
as she wondered how it would
that she fell to thinking what
theirs was. How curious it all was
thing life was! What an odd his-
tory. How strange it was that Charlie
by a curious chain of circumstances
were, in Mr. Lyndsay's home.
The scene had the walls of this
down. As she thought of that
ago, she wondered how she ever
it. What a life for a girl to lead
to turn her thoughts that way
while she was living out day
monotonous routine, incarcerated
Charlie had been living out
and chafing against her, again

herself that it was that early trial to make it what it now was. The same character which had at first him, she could not but own that and matured under the influence of. It might have been that, in a spirit happy, something of depth and been wanting, and God, by giving had developed the want and supplied result was a character at once rare. For he was not, as many would be the like circumstances, a soured Far from it. He had borne his life tained through it all a natural sweetness and power of enjoyment; the freedom and the charm of youth; the alertness and keenness in both his amusements and occupations.

Still his character bore inaffable early disappointment, giving the depth, and reality.

"So it has been for the best, after all; and as she spoke he came out loud; and as she spoke he came

Leaning back in her chair, a
two she loved so dearly rapidly
timacy, her doubts and fears van
told her that all would be well.

never found it out—been a war companion with kindred tastes and mother's interest and sympathy in keen as they had always been, when he grew older, a little forced—looker-on. She could enjoy them, she could not always join in them, one ever ready to share in them, zest and unflagging zeal as himself.

Lord Wardlaw, on his side, feelings his first introduction to temporarily awakened, and daily new quality to love and admire.

So far all went well. But Wardlaw in any way came before his mother, the moment he interdegree with what Mervyn considered rights, that moment all was changed.

It might be only that he had that he mounted her on her horse, her a flower from the conservatory was enough to set the boy's indignation, and to make him

front, bounded over it. Lord Wardlaw, for example, and then turned to assist

Magdalen, in getting over it, tangled in her gown; and if Lord Wardlaw had not been close at hand, she must have

Mervyn, looking hastily round for a change of position of affairs, and was surprised for not having been as attended to by his father.

"It is an awkward gate for Lord Wardlaw. "I think a step might be taken on the side of the third bar, to make it easier. Don't you, Magdalen?"

"I think it would be a very good idea," answered, "and very easily done."

"It had better be done at once," said Lord Wardlaw's husband, "as we so often come to speak about it."

A sudden insane feeling of indignation at Lord Wardlaw's interference came over Mervyn.

"It's always been like that," said Lord Wardlaw, "it does very well."

he had received from his mother. He muttered again, passionately, "how dare he make me feel so!" She was never angry with me.

He did not go home till he was a little better. No notice was taken of his illness. He was treated him exactly as if nothing had happened. Only in his mother's eyes he was a little in the same grave shadow, and it made her sad.

A fresh turn, however, was brought about by his mother's announcement that she had written to say Nina would be coming to Mervyn in a few days.

For the next day or two he was very happy for her comfort and enjoyment. He made the change with pleasure, and Nina's presence would divert her from herself, by giving him a chance to show his care.

On the morning of her expected arrival, before starting for the Vicarage, he intended to go into a little garden he was making for his cousin, close to his own.

Mervyn stood in front of downcast eyes, his violets in his hand. He did not offer to take them. He hesitated. Then, raising his head, he burst out passionately.

"Why does he always interfere with me? It is my fault!"

Lady Wardlaw made no answer, but went away to the window, and stood looking out.

"Mother," pleaded Mervyn, holding out his violets, "please take them."

"No, dear," she answered gently. "I cannot take them now."

"Why not?" burst out Mervyn.

"They would give me no pleasure," she answered; "they would only remind me of the gift which was only . . . what I fear is fast becoming."

"What?" asked Mervyn, looking at her with a fearful expression.

"Selfish," she answered. "I am entirely selfish."

"I can't help it," cried Mervyn. "It is my fault. I was never like this before."

listlessly, as unlike his eagerness as possible.

The vicar noticed he was not very responsive, but he asked no questions. Mervyn thus once or twice alluded a little at the reason. He said that his mother had named, and that he found him with him; but he found him that he thought it best to leave off half-way to visit some of his friends.

Left to himself, Mervyn was thoroughly wretched and discontented with himself, and displeased with his situation. He dawdled along, anxious to get home as soon as possible, his return home, and was getting absently over his head, struck against some unwonted

"What in the world is it? And he stooped down to see.

The ledge!—the step Lord had put off!—the step he, in his wrath, never be put on. His smouldering

as she sat there with her hands by the fire. Thoughts of their help he had been to her, of things he had consciously done for her. Absence, had intensified her feelings, had grown to look upon him as a messenger of peace and goodness, the part of a guiding-star in her life by the light of a brighter and holier things. He reminded her of what was so interwoven with every part of her past. He would be for ever in her mind with her little dear memories she held so sadly, shrinking, heard Totty's dear words in her ears, it was Mervyn who supported her. In that terrible night of the storm, it was the sound of his voice, that brought her to a better state of mind. The morning after her illness she had found Mervyn watching her in his unselfishness to hide his

established her by the time
waited, to engage her in
eyes wandered every moment
seemed to be listening to

The door opened rather
and the girl started and g
only Lord Wardlaw.

"Mervyn is late," he s
here by this time. I suppo
come and meet him, Nina
afternoon."

Nina looked so unfeign
idea, that Magdalen had no
and sent for her things. Le
her up carefully, and promise
her if she was tired.

"This fine mountain air w
into your little pale face," h
opened the hall-door. They
autumn sunset; and Nina's eye
ing she could not define on th
tains, and the richly wooded c
the warm glow of the setting su

"He doesn't hurry h
never knew Mervyn walk
doesn't see us yet. He w
first, as I think I hide you
side. Why, how languidly
generally bounds along."

Nina's heart beat quick
graceful figure approach; v
her old characteristics, she
away and hide herself.

Mervyn, when he did a
step-father, stopped short, an
did not see who was sitting
took it for granted it must b
seized with a feeling of guilt;
of what he had just done. F
till that moment, how wrong!
but now conscience told him
dread his mother going on to
the havoc he had made.

Suddenly, he recognised
figure in its deep mourning,
upon it the traces of sickness

over him; and then, in his old impetu-
dashed forward, calling out as he
Nina!"

Nina started from her seat, and was
meet him, all her shyness having fled
sound of his voice.

Lord Wardlaw felt a little nervous
the impetuous advance, fearing his strength
gotten how weak and delicate Nina
himself in readiness to protect her
should be knocked over; little know-
noisy greeting and boisterous em-
best medicines the poor child could
when, the meeting over, the children
entwined, and happy faces, came
him, their heads close together, in
conversation, he realised that there
for his presence, and no need to
smiling, left them together, and
the story to his wife.

lowed his every movement with an evident delight. Magdalen fancied a day spent with her cousin would be a satisfaction to make her feel more at home. So she wrote Lord Wardlaw that they should ride to a neighbour's house at a great distance for luncheon, leaving Mervyn in charge of the home. A holiday was to be given him for the purpose; and the arrangement gave satisfaction to all parties. So all the next day the two were alone, as in the old days.

Bit by bit, Nina told Mervyn of her life at home; of the happy state of things there, and of her mother; and of how different it was now. She was getting quite fond of the life, and Edmund had become sensible, and Cecily, too, had grown so sensible, and used to sit in her room and get her anything she wanted.

Mademoiselle, who had come to the house now that she didn't mind the leave-taking, her headaches, and really wanted to answer.

to love everybody, and how much easier it makes everything. And it *does* make me happier. If I were to hear that news about happy homes, and the love of children, brothers and sisters, I should feel much better now. I feel it is all Mervyn. For if you had never come I should never have known what being kind meant. You were always nice and attentive to everyone, and made me feel like you wherever you went. I am always like you, and am going to try to be like you, and am going to try to be like you.

"Oh stop, stop! Nina," exclaimed science-stricken Mervyn, jumping up in scarlet, "you don't know what I really mean. I don't deserve to be like you."

Nina looked at him in surprise, remembered that on a former occasion he had blushed in the presence of a certain reserve had crept over her, she had not been able to account for it, and then what the flaw could

in that moment to believe, as many believed before her, to their infinite trouble, that it *was* wrong after all to tensely, and to expend so much affective beings; that it was, in fact, to worship more than the Creator; that such love into idolatry, and brought a host of train. The child would have been the words of a writer of the present one ever loved child, parent, or sister. It is not the intensity of affection, interference with truth or duty, that makes Love was given, sanctioned, and ends that *self might be annulled.*" Some sense and meaning came to her as she tried in her own mind to excuse by accusing herself, and turning back to her little dead brother; sought love for him, such flaw had not was no use. Her innate truthfulness over her wish to screen Mervyn; and but own to herself that she would *who* rendered the little boy tender.

would only remind me that my boy
I fear his affection for me is fast

And the scales fell from his eyes

"I'll never be like that again
petuously. "I see it all now. I see
mother as unselfishly as you loved
not mind who did all the things
they were done. Now should I?"

"Perhaps not," said Nina, softly

Mervyn's demeanour to his step-
mother was very marked. Twice he
when about to do some little service
because he saw Lord Wardlaw on
it. He went to bed happy, and
visions. But he quite forgot to mention
about the gate!

"What a number of shooting parties
have been lately," said Magdalen,
at breakfast, putting down the paper
third I have seen in a fortnight
Mervyn, please be careful."

him; "bear in mind my warning accidents."

"No fear with only one gun smiling, as he leant against the wall with his cigar; "I shan't be late to-day to do any good after half-past nine. Where's Mervyn?"

Mervyn soon appeared, and Magdalen and Nina watching the show. A pretty sight, altogether. The man, with his gun on his shoulder, bounding along by his side; the dogs behind. At any rate the thought so, looking at them with

Just as they disappeared she looked up at his step-father, and Lord Mervyn, with his arm round the boy's shoulder, a sigh of pleasure from the wind

The morning passed pleasantly after luncheon Magdalen and Lord Mervyn. There was a good deal of driving and they were detained there

wondering why her uncle and cc
It rendered her unable to tal
thinking she was tired, took up
to read. Nina leaned back
watched her. How calm she lo
she was reading her book, and
seemed in it. Nina sighed, an
be as calm, and not worry her
fears. It gave her strength, he
that it was but nervousness on
there was nothing really to be a

"I will not let myself get fus
half-past five."

Twenty minutes past five, five
past five; still no sound of
heart began to beat again, but
face opposite quieted her. Stil
wishing the room were not quit
It made everything feel so like
not like to think it was so lat
be doing? Why should *both* be
possible Lord Wardlaw could h
hour. Why did he promise

"Oh, it's nothing, nothing, a said, still trying to hide her face so silly. Since that dreadful frightens me, and . . . and . . .

Just then the clock struck Nina started.

"Are you frightened because home?" said Magdalen, tenderly, be, dear, really. Mervyn is a and Charlie is often much later

"But he said . . ." began Ni

"He certainly said he would early; but he was shooting at day, and would have a long way off. He would be sure to shoot don't you see? I don't think he now, I assure you, dear. He must way off all day, for we have shot. Generally there is poppi all the time he is out."

Comforted a little, Nina la again.

"It is all right, dear," Magdalen's voice sounded rather strident, letting off his gun before he could. He will soon be here now."

"But that other sound," Nin said, so faintly that the words were hardly heard.

"What?" said Magdalen, sharply.

"Oh nothing, nothing," said Nin. "Let us shut the window, Aunt cold."

So they returned into the parlour. The lamp-light fell upon their faces, paler than ever, and a look of anxiety had not been there before.

She sat down again with her hands not reading it now; and Nin sat by the fire, pretending to warm herself, but keep her back to Magdalen and her eyes.

What is it that has brought this change on Magdalen's calm face? What dread that has risen in her breast?

after her illness. But she ought to time, in front of that roaring fire. .

What a curious thing attitude was so much sometimes! What did that crouching attitude express?

What if Nina *had* heard it to ask her?

But the mother's heart failed her to ask, lest she should hear from the confirmation of her own terrible suspicion. Had she heard it, it could not be fancy.

She would wait five minutes more if they had not arrived, she would wait.

In the meanwhile she tried to remember if it had not been Mervyn's voice. No, it was not passing, either shouting to another or whispering the sound of the gun.

In vain! The mother *could* not remember; she was mistaken; knew in her heart that it was not a boy's voice; the voice she loved so much that had been the music of her life for many years!

"You are a brave little thing, Nina," she taking the icy hands in hers; "but you need not a strain upon yourself any longer. Sit down, and tell me all about it. You need not be a for me. We will bear it together."

Nina sank down, sobbing, on the floor, and her head against Magdalen's knee. Magdalen down and kissed her without speaking.

"It is hard you should have new troubles poor child," she said, faintly, after a pause; and she spoke she clasped her hands tightly together won't question you darling, for we both know we heard. But we won't give up hope yet. It be that . . . it . . . was averted just in time. in that case they will be here directly. We wait patiently for ten minutes longer, and then if they have not come . . . we must send to see what has happened. Do not speak, dear; there is no need to answer. Only pray."

Her bowed head sank upon her clasped her lips just touching the girl's pale brow. silence reigned in the room; no sound but a solemn stillness; no sound of lamentation from

CHAPTER XV.

The Footsteps on the dead Leaves.

MERVYN bounded along by his step-father's side after leaving Glen-Mervyn, full of spirits. His good resolutions had strengthened, and his conscience at rest.

He chatted on, on all sorts of subjects, till he came to the spot where their roads diverged.

"Could I not meet you somewhere on the way back this afternoon," he said, turning his face up to his companion, "so that we might be home together?"

Lord Wardlaw put his arm affectionately round the boy as he answered, "Certainly, my dear Mervyn. Let me see. What shall we make our trysting place? Suppose we say the old gate? I shall have time to come after I leave off shooting, and I suppose I shall be there till a quarter past

anxious to arrive there first, he did not wait too soon, and to have to wait about in the street. He stayed chatting to the vicar for some time till Mr. Hughes remarked it was a dark evening and he thought he had better start.

"I could find my way home blindfold," Mervyn, "so it does not make much difference to me."

However, he jumped up, and on glancing at the clock was surprised to find that it was very late time for Lord Wardlaw to be at the trysting place.

"If I run all the way, I shall just catch him," said, as he wished the vicar good-night.

He was surprised, when he got out of the house, to find how very dark it was. There were no stars, and he could only just see his way. As he had said, no difficulty to him, knowing the way, did, every step of the way; but he began to feel a little puzzled.

"He will never find the gate," he said to himself; "it is a good thing I am here to show him where it is."

He stopped for a minute to hear if there was any sound.

"Stop!" Mervyn called out. "Halloa! stop a minute!"

It might have been the loud tones of his own song that prevented Lord Wardlaw hearing; or, if the sound *did* reach his ears, he must have thought it was some boy passing by and calling to another, for he did not pause or answer; and Mervyn only heard the receding footsteps, and the song getting fainter in the distance—

But I had my task to finish,
And she had gone home to rest.

"He must be nearly at the gate now," thought Mervyn. "I shall never get up to him." Hardly had the thought passed through his mind when it was succeeded by another, which made him stop short and exclaim, "Good gracious!"

Quick as lightning came the thought that Lord Wardlaw in the darkness would not perceive the change on the gate, and, expecting a step where there was none, would most likely lose his footing in vaulting over it, and get a very disagreeable fall. To make it worse, he had his **gun with him**, and it

Mervyn's faint cries were unheard. And now the gate must be close at hand. Breathless and despairing there burst from the boy's lips the wild piercing cry, "Father! father!"

For one happy moment he fancied there was a pause, and he strained every nerve and tore along at lightning speed. But if the word did reach Lord Wardlaw's ears it was, unhappily, too unfamiliar for him to suppose it could apply to him, and Mervyn's pricking conscience told him it was so.

To his dismay, the song burst out afresh, and the firm footsteps on the crackling leaves increased in speed, as if nearing the end of their journey. Presently, voice and footsteps stopped.

The darkness was broken by a sudden flash of light, and simultaneously with a crash and a heavy fall there rang out into the silence the sounds which, penetrating far and wide, reached even to the open window at Glen-Mervyn—the loud explosion of a gun, followed by an agonised cry in a boy's voice.

DOWN TOGETHER.
How the boy got there he never could
wards tell; how he reached the gate, how he cl
over it, he never knew; how he knelt down, h
dared kneel down by the motionless figure as
he never could imagine, he never could b
think.

Frozen with horror, stupefied with grief,
for a time deprived of sense or motion. The
the darkness, the loneliness, the impossib
doing anything, the horror of the whole thi
prived him of the power to act, to think,
Help he must have, human aid and succou
munition with some living thing, or he will
But, in that wild secluded spot, how is
found? His fainting heart reminds him o
gone by, when in sport he hid himself
lonely place, and saw no passer-by from
nightfall. It was horrible, horrible, to be
the darkness with the dead. If he could li
voice and call, if his frozen tongue could
its office, even then, who would hear? W
catch the sound of his cry, and bear it on
wards his home? No one!

Presently it seems to him so long since it happened, so long since the time he started Glen-Mervyn, his step-father in health by his the keeper and the dogs behind. That could have been this morning. Oh no, a long time. His step-father has been lying there many now, and he, for years—or all his life long, he—has been sitting silent, alone in the dark with the dead.

Why should Thought at that moment resume her sway? Hitherto he has been too bewildered to collect his ideas; but now, a moment, from the darkness around him, brings clear tableaux before him, and gives them he must, whether he will or no. The tableaux—the past, the present, and the future.

Puts before him first the picture of his old and happy home. Lifelike and distinct moving figures, just as he saw them last.

Shifts the tableau, and shows him his youth and its brightness and its joy are flown. Before him the sudden conviction that, through his passionate act of selfish rebellion, he has

"Going," he muttered, "going far away; never to come back any more."

All that he was leaving, all that he was losing, came rushing over his soul like a whirlwind, and a sob burst from his aching heart.

"Mother!" he cried, holding out his hands in the darkness, "I shall never see you again! Oh, mother! good-bye! good-bye!"

But he *could* not leave her like this. He must find *some* way to tell her of how it had all come about; of all he had meant to do; of his contrition and his firm resolutions.

"I have a message to send her," he said, sobbing, unconsciously using the words of the fatal song; "and send it I must and will."

But the echoes will not take it, cruel and unforgiving as they are! Help and succour have throughout been wanting; messengers, then, are far away.

Oh, what was the nearest human habitation? What was the last human voice that fell upon his ear? His puzzled brain refused to remember; his fainting heart told him it was days and days ago.

friend. I have a message to send her, and no one can give it but you. I meant to tell you what I had done. I tried all I could to overtake you. Oh, why did you go so quick? You will tell her all this in her dreams, and you will forgive me, I know. And tell her too, that I loved you, and called you 'father' at last."

Suddenly the boy paused, and starting, listened intently. A vague feeling of electric hope thrilled through his heart, and he bent over the figure again. There was a slight rustle of the dead leaves, and a deep-drawn sigh. Bending closer and closer, he heard the sigh repeated, and a faint voice say, "Be comforted, my child; I am not much hurt!"

THROWN TOGETHER.

"I consider you my preserver," he said, laughing, "for what should I do now if you had not pursued me so perseveringly. I should be in a nice plight alone here, in the dark, with no means of getting assistance. I think I shall have to send you home to order some conveyance from the stables, for I don't believe I can walk. Lend me a hand, Mervyn, and let me see."

The result of the experiment was, that he could not stand with any comfort; and they held a long conversation as to what had better be done. It was settled that Mervyn should run to the stables, and give orders; and then go on, and tell his mother what had happened.

"I am afraid she will be anxious about us," said Lord Wardlaw, "as we are so far behind our time; so it will be better for you not to return here, but to go on at once to the house."

"I don't like leaving you alone," said Mervyn wistfully.

"Never fear, my dear boy. I shall go very well."

He particularly wanted to bring in to his mother in his present, and pouring out his confused account he would have happened; how long it would take Nina to unravel the truth from and how much time they would spend in the meantime.

Mervyn said nothing more, but obeyed his step-father's bidding.

Consternation reigned in the hall, and willing hands made hasty use of Lord Wardlaw's assistance.

Then the boy sped on. His heart as he entered the halls he had thought he should never enter the beloved presence he had never seek again. Remembering his injunctions, he checked his hasty passage, and quietly opened the door.

He had meant to speak so softly as to walk in leisurely; but when he

can be got from the stables. And that is all I may tell you."

Lady Wardlaw changed colour as he spoke, but she looked more puzzled than alarmed.

"Tell me all about it, my darling," she said sitting down and drawing him to her; "do not hide anything from me. And Nina, come here too, and help me to understand."

Passing her arm round the slight form of the still trembling girl, whose dark eyes never moved from Mervyn's face, devouring him as one just risen from the grave, Magdalen laid her disengaged hand on the boy's, and waited for him to begin.

Mervyn's face was a study. Never in his life had he been so puzzled and dumbfounded. To refuse to comply with a request of his mother's was a thing altogether strange and impossible. On the other hand, to disobey his step-father was equally impossible. To break his promise—a promise made under such peculiar circumstances—was out of the question. He looked from his mother to Nina, and from Nina to his mother, with a scared face, and said nothing.

disobeyed me before. Do not break my heart now!"

"Mother, mother!" cried the boy, in despair; "don't, please don't! If you only knew all, you would say I was right."

"But *why* should I not know all," she demanded, "if, *as* you say, there *is* nothing?"

"Because I have promised," said Mervyn.

"Tell me one thing," she said, and her voice faltered; "why did you shout and cry as if in grief or terror when the gun went off?"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mervyn, stepping back in his astonishment, "how did you know anything about the gun? That is the very thing I was not to mention to you."

Magdalen was dismayed at the effect of her words.

"There is some dreadful mystery here," she said, rising and advancing to the bell; "and if you will not unravel it, I must find others who will."

She took the bell-rope in her hand, and was about to ring, when she was startled by a glad

Mervyn flew on the wings of love to execute his bidding, almost upsetting his mother in his eagerness to perform the office. She gave way, a little bewildered, but well pleased to see the boy's demeanour. She sat down on the sofa near, with her arm round Nina. The impetuous boy flung himself at her feet, and poured forth his tale.

They all listened with breathless interest, an interest that became quite painful when he painted in vivid language his hot pursuit through the woods, the terrible dénouement, and the harrowing details of his lonely vigil in the darkness. But when he went on to describe the three pictures that had risen around him, and the determination to which gazing on them had brought him, Magdalen held up her hand in mute entreaty, for it was more than she could bear. But Mervyn would not stop, would not spare himself or her, till he had made a full and free confession. And he went on to tell them all that he had felt, all that he had said, and all that he had done. But he had gone too far. When he got to the parting with his mother—when

lips, "please do not praise me. Uncle Charlie, if you only knew what I was before he came to Granton, you would see how much I owe to him, and how grateful I ought to be."

She spoke in a tone of concentrated fervour surprised out of her usual reserve; and her beautiful eyes glowed and deepened as she raised the beseechingly to Mervyn's face.

"Hush!" said Magdalen, very softly; "hush! darlings. Love one another and be grateful to another, if you will; but give the praise on Him by whom you were thrown together."

The book is ended, and the story is told characters have acted before us, and the has fallen on them all. So we have do them; and returning each to our own life or only slightly remember, the parts t played.

Yet it may be, that in life's drama we the same parts as they; it may be we a in our paths, the lessons they learnt in t circumstances may be different, and o

unit, an atom; yet without it, it may be, the fabric would fall to pieces.

Looking upwards on a starlight evening, realise the units of the glittering sky? Stand the sea, do we consider the atoms of the street? Yet every star in the heavens has its tread; and every grain of sand on the shore has its place to fill.

Alike in Life and Nature, all seems confusion. To us the sand seems ever shifting, the toy of every wave and every tide. To us the stars seem loosely scattered, sown cast on the firmament; sand and stars in a meaningless, purposeless way. Yet God reigns over all creation the law of purpose and order.

So, to us, the infinite varieties of creatures the world seem thrown together in a chaos—a seething mass of conflicting interests working out their own ends amid error and confusion. Yet all is pervaded by a Sovereign Purpose, which we in our blindness do not see. To us, all is in hopeless entanglement; to

ordered minds all things are out of course; to Him, all the parts, fitly joined together, are working up to the end He has ordained—to a perfect consummation. Silently is He ordering all things to the same end; mysteriously guiding our many feet, by the many thousand paths, to the same goal, blending our countless notes to the same glorious harmony; making, by His Almighty power, "all things work together for good."

THE END.

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